



## PANCHAYATI RAJ AND THEIR ROLE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT: AN ANALYSIS OF TRIBAL PANCHAYAT IN CENTRAL INDIA

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### ABSTRACT

**P**anchayati Raj Institution has plays multiple role in the recent days. It works as a development agent in village level. According to Madhya Pradesh Panchayati-Raj Act, today 50 per cent reservation in Gram Panchayat and their upper level tier. Present paper is examines the working of one tribal dominated panchayat which falls under Schedule V area. Today, panchayat is focused only on infrastructural work rather than social issues. One of the major responsibilities of panchayat is to empower women but panchayat does not work in this area. All the works done with the approval of gram sabha but now a day gram sabha meetings have not held properly and adequate manner. Due to lack of awareness, nobody has known about the role and responsibility of gram sabha. Lastly, some suggestions have been given to the strengthening of gram panchayat and gram sabha as well.

**KEY WORDS:** PRI, Scheduled Tribes, Panchayat, Development

### BACKGROUND

Participation continues to be the buzz word in the 'development' world, the hum has been changing though. Today, in the era of globalization, Panchayati Raj Institution has plays multiple role. Some would treat as an administrative agency and others as an extension of democracy at the grass-root level. And others believe as a charter of rural local self-governance. In these concept images would co-exist side-by side tending to militate against each other at least in the short run. None of them would be seriously pursued. This has led to crisis of expectations all along the line. Apart from the, fundamental rights and directive principal of state, as also numerous other constitutional provisions and status enjoinion protect of the interest of the weaker sections. Report of the Committee on Panchayati Raj Institutions, popularly known as Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) document the inability of PRI of promote the interest of

weaker sections. Also, the Bongirwar Committee (1971) on Panchayati Raj in Maharashtra observed that the effort at organizational level of Panchayati-Raj bodies or at the individual level of the office bearers was grievously lacking in real and content. Further, representation of scheduled tribes is not proportionate to their population since the Acts specify the reservation by a particular number uniformly.

It is worthwhile to mention that in the State Acts Provision for reservation of seats for SC, ST and women are mandatory. The PR Acts in several states provide for statutory representation for SC & ST members in proportion to their population. A desirable feature of the Karnataka Act is the minimum of 15 per cent seats for SC and 3 per cent seats for ST. Further, all the state Acts have provided for the mandatory one third seats for women in each category but Madhya Pradesh and Bihar only these



two states, 50 per cent seat reserves for the women candidates. In Madhya Pradesh 50 per cent women’s reservation has been started since 2010 elections.

The tribes have been managing both individual and community based issues informally through the Panchayat. Most often such bodies men who commanded respect at the local level. In many cases position in this council of elders was by and large hereditary. The main task of such council of elders was to maintain identity, security, and cultural heritage in the community. To attain these objectives both positive and negative sanctions were used. However, with the introduction of Indian Constitution and one man one vote along with the expansion of modern regulatory institutions like Panchayat-Raj and judiciary in the tribal societies, situation has significantly changed. The traditional council of elders are no more either in existence or effectively among many of the tribes especially in the areas which are outside the Sixth Schedule. It has almost disappeared from the developed tribal villages. At some places the traditional tribal leaders have joined the formal institution like PRI, State and central level politics but at many more places leadership have completely shifted to tribal youths. Many tribal women have also joined Panchayats due to reservation policy of the state (Mishra, 2005, 2008-09, 2009-10, 2011 & 2012). Present paper is examined the mode of functioning in tribal areas and their achievement. What is socio-economic profile of panchayat representatives? Which type of works have been done by the Panchayats? What is the role of gram sabha to effective functioning in Gram Panchayat? These pertinent questions are traced by this paper.

**STUDY AREA**

The study was conducted in Betul district of Madhya Pradesh. Pathai Panchayat falls under the Sahpur

Development Block. The Panchayat as well as Block falls under schedule V area. In Pathai Panchayat, there are three villages i.e. Pathai, Nishana and Bhagtandhana, where the study was conducted.

**METHODOLOGY**

Number of technique were used to collect data from different sources. Interview guide was used to collect information from key-informants such as Panchayat representatives and Development functionaries working at the Panchayat and Block level. Documentary sources such as government reports, Census report, records and Gazetteer report plays crucial role to providing information in the historical perspective. We also used Right to Information (RTI) technique to known about government run development schemes in Pathai Panchayat in the recent past. Case study technique was used to present Panchayat representatives especially Panchayat President. This paper is based on the panchayat tenure of 2005-2009.

**FINDINGS**

**Gram Panchayat:-**

The study was conducted in Pathai Panchayat of Sahpur Development Block of Betul district. Logic behind selecting Sahpur Block was numerical predominance of tribal population. In Pathai Panchayat more than 99 per cent has tribal population. They are Gond and Korku. The entire area of Sahpur is dominated by Gond population and only in some villages are resides Korku tribe. Pathai is located at a distance of about 4 kms, Nishana is 6 kms and Bhagtahdhana is 8 kms from Sahpur Development Block office as well as Betul-Itarsi National Highways (NH 69). There are 386 households i.e. Pathai (200), Nishana (124) and Bhagtandhana (62) in Pathai Panchayat. Details are as under:

**Table: 1 Demographic Profile of Pathai Panchayat**

S.No.	Profile	Pathai	Nishana	Bhagtandhana
1	Household <sup>^</sup>	201	124	62
2	Population <sup>^</sup>	1174	672	338
3	Tribal Population <sup>^</sup>	1078 (91.8%)	618 (92.1%)	337 (99.7%)
4	Farmer *	85	100	52
5	Labourer*	410	56	45
6	Engaged in other work*	36	87	9
7	Literacy rate*	37.7	26.5	27
8	Name of tribe <sup>^</sup>	Gond	Gond	Gond & Korku
9	Geographical Area#	598.290 Hec.	363.804 Hec.	120.608 Hec.
10	Sex Ratio*	1030	1030	971

Note: \* Data obtained from Census 2001  
 #Data obtained from Patwari.  
 ^Data obtained from field work.



All these villages are dominated by tribal population (more than 90 per cent). Head office of Panchayat alongwith panchayat **Bhawan** is located at Pathai itself. It is the biggest village in the Panchayat. Of the 21 members in the Panchayat council, 12 members including Sarpanch (President) and Up-sarpanch (Vice-president), belongs to Pathai, 9 of them are women, including Sarpanch are women and remaining 12 are men.

Sarpanch is literate. Other 13 are also literate. Remaining 7 are educated between class 5<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> standard. Barring one or two all the women members are literate. All the 21 members of Panchayat including Sarpanch are tribal. Social and demographic profile of each of the Panchayat representatives of Pathai Panchayat during 2005-09 was as under.

**Table : 2 Profile of Representatives of Pathai Panchayat (2005-2009)**

S. No	Name	Post	Sex	Village	Educational Status	Age	Land ownership (in acres)
1	Rajni Dhurve	Sarpanch	Female	Pathai	Literate	45	3.5
2	Sarvan	Up-Sarpanch	Male	Pathai	8 <sup>th</sup>	42	2
3	Babli	Panch	Female	Pathai	5 <sup>th</sup>	35	1.5
4	Sakun	Panch	Female	Pathai	Literate	36	2
5	Amarsingh	Panch	Male	Pathai	8 <sup>th</sup>	33	6
6	Ramsingh	Panch	Male	Pathai	Literate	42	8
7	Kanhiya	Panch	Male	Pathai	4 <sup>th</sup>	37	3
8	Fulanta	Panch	Female	Pathai	Literate	35	9
9	Shivrati	Panch	Female	Pathai	Literate	32	5
10	Manohar	Panch	Male	Pathai	7 <sup>th</sup>	37	8
11	Madan	Panch	Male	Pathai	10 <sup>th</sup>	34	12
12	Sarvan	Panch	Male	Pathai	3 <sup>rd</sup>	33	5
13	Ramkishor	Panch	Male	Nisana	Literate	29	2
14	Imrat	Panch	Male	Nisana	Literate	38	0
15	Umrat	Panch	Male	Nisana	4 <sup>th</sup>	36	0
16	Sandeep	Panch	Male	Nisana	7 <sup>th</sup>	29	0
17	Dasaundee	Panch	Female	Nisana	Literate	39	0
18	Kishori	Panch	Female	Nisana	5 <sup>th</sup>	28	0
19	Makal	Panch	Male	Bhagtandhana	Literate	42	2
20	Lalita	Panch	Female	Bhagtandhana	8 <sup>th</sup>	28	0
21	Premwati	Panch	Female	Bhagtandhana	Literate	27	0

Source: Data obtained from Dec. 2009 at Panchayat Office, Pathai.

Note: 1. S.N. 10 Manahor is now no more. The post is vacant.

2. S.N. 5 and 11 were elected second time in the panchayat election.

Profile of Panchayat representatives reveal that large number of them are landless, women are in large number, although, males still dominate. Most of them are either literate or they have received education only up to primary level. They are between the age group of 27 to 45 years. Hence, Panchayat leadership in Pathai is by and large in the hands of young people. Sarpanch the oldest person is about 45 years of age.

### **Rajni Dhurve (Now Ex-Sarpanch) : Profile and Narratives:-**

Rajni Dhurve, the Ex-Sarpanch of Pathai Gram Panchayat is about 45 year of age. She is Gond. She claims literate but she has not attended school in the formal sense. Her husband Narayan Dhurve is a teacher in government middle school. And he is Graduate. Rajni hails from joint family. There are 9 members in the family. Her mother-in-law lives separately with her younger son. Family

has different sources of income. These are both primary and secondary. For instance, family owns about 3.5 acres of land and cultivate more than 4 acres land on contract basis. It provides food security to the family. Annual income of her husband is more than 1.25 lacs. Her two sons are engaged in agriculture and wage work. In brief, income of the family from all the sources are more than Rs. 2 lacs per annum. Family also owns big *pucca* house having 7 living rooms. There is toilet facility constructed at their own cost outside the house. Approximate cost of the house is more than 2.5 lacs. Availability of separate drawing room, sofa-set, telephone, colour Television and 2 two-wheelers reflect that family is economically better off at the local level. This is also reflected from the fact that her daughters are enrolled at high schools. Type and quality of food is normal and living standard is higher than other tribal households in Pathai Panchayat. She herself said,

*“Earlier also we used to spend more in comparison to other villagers. After becoming Sarpanch expenditure on different heads has significantly increased. Number and frequency of visitors have also increased.”*

She was elected Sarpanch in 2006. High awareness and information level of her husband regarding Panchayat related acts and provisions, assertiveness on her part, better economic condition, higher social status in the locality, all helped her to win Panchayat election. Commenting on expenditure in panchayat election she said that today poor tribal cannot contest panchayat election because it is a very costly affair. Relatives and well wishers are invited during the course of election. They was to be properly treated. They are also served local wine (called mahua frooty). In return, they create favourable public opinion in order to win panchayat election. She also said that she was not interested to become Sarpanch. But villagers decided that Sarpanch should belong to Pathai and not another village. The seat of Sarpanch was reserved for women. Villagers motivated her husband Narayan Dhurve to encourage Rajni to fight the election. Now she is very active, bold and assertive. While interacting with villagers she speaks in *Gond* dialect but while interacting with officials and outsiders she communicates in Hindi.

Secretary of Pathai Gram Panchayat, Mansa Ram is also Gond and he also belongs to Pathai. He keeps two-wheeler and he is young well informed and active. Most of the time, he carries Sarpanch to Block office for meeting. She claims that nobody from her family interferes in the functioning of Panchayat. But in course of survey we found this claim untenable. We came to know that it is not she rather it is her husband and panchayat secretary who prepare agenda for *gram sabha* meeting. Both of them get approval of *Gram Sabha* of their agenda very easily. 21 *Gram Sabha* meeting is organized but very small number of villagers participated in the meeting. Fixed and villagers put their signature on proposals and decisions even without physically attending the meeting. This is primarily because of (a) indifferent attitude, (b) their busy schedule and fear of loss of wage, and (c) assertiveness on the part of sarpanch and her family members. It was also reported that on different occasions as per the advice of CEO posted at Janpad Panchayat, Panchayat Secretary not only prepare proposal even without formally consulting the sarpanch and other members of *Gram Sabha*, but also he gets its approval from *gram sabha*. Rajni is about to complete her five years term of Sarpanch, but during the entire tenure of 5 years she has not presented any proposal in the meeting of *gram sabha* for its approval at her own. She said,

*“My husband knows difference between right and wrong. The level of his wisdom is much higher than me. If I will do at my own I can make mistake. Hence, most often whatever I do, I do it under the advice and guidance of my active and well informed husband.”*

This statement clearly reflect that agenda and items of Panchayat are identified and selected not by her but by her husband. She admitted that after joining panchayat her level of self confidence have increased. Her level of information and awareness have also increased, but since she is only literate, therefore, she is unable to understand official language. Many times she is unable to read government letters and consume convince government officials in a logical manner. In response to a question regarding her achievements during the tenure of Sarpanch she said,

*“After becoming Sarpanch large number of people came to know me, I also know so many people even from outside Pathai. I have no hesitation to go to any office and meet any official. Had I not been elected as Sarpanch I might have been engaged in gossiping and fighting with my daughter-in-law.”*

She admitted that at the local level no effort have been made by panchayat either for proper management of local available resources especially land, water and forest nor to deal with local problems. Some indigenous knowledge is used to manage local situations. Pathai gram panchayat is seriously facing the problem of irrigation. But this problem still persists with reference to majority of population. As a result, modern and more profitable family is no show to villages. Local forest is shrinking fast. Most of the villagers obtain firewood for themselves and for the market from this forest. Firewood is a viable source of livelihood for many households. Panchayat can not stop this by providing alternate emolument for the villagers. Panchayat is also cannot deal with the increasing consumption of *mahua* liquor by majority of villagers. It cannot stop sale of *mahua* liquor by different shops and households from Pathai village itself.

### **Meeting of Gram Sabha:-**

As per the Madhya Pradesh *Panchayati-Raj and Gram Swaraj Adhiniyam*, 1993 each gram panchayat is supposed to organize gram sabha meeting. During the month of January, April, July and October in the normal course and on other occasions as required, with the permission of the Collector (Jindal, 2002). The purpose of the meeting is to make villagers aware about powers and functions of gram panchayat. It is also organized to identify

and discuss relevant issues, which needs to be addressed by the panchayat for overall development of the village. Villagers, on the basis of their experience, are supposed to identify those issues facing family and community which need urgent intervention by the panchayat. Any scheme sanctioned by the district and Block level panchayat and government departments must be approved by the **gram sabha**. All the adult men and women of the village are members of Gram Sabha. They are supposed to attend Gram Sabha meetings as and when it is organized.

During the tenure of Rajni Dhurve, Sarpanch (2005-2009) altogether 21 Gram Sabha meetings were organized. 17 meetings were comment holds for want of quorum<sup>1</sup> 4 meetings were cancelled. Whether a **gram sabha** meeting was attended by small number of villagers or not it is another story. In most meetings villagers was not presence. Only the Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch and couple of panches participated in the meeting. The data reveal that of all 17 meetings only 5 meetings were held technically right way. It is said that many meetings were

formally not called but all formalities were coupled on paper, by Sarpanch and Secretary of the panchayat and some panches were asked to put their signature the so-called meeting was over. Hence, it is difficult to say that all the agenda presented in the so-called meetings and its approval by committee was really based on number participation. During the course of study it was observed that villagers do not know about the importance of gram sabha and its meetings. They only assemble in large number at the Panchayat Bhavan when they are directed by the Sarpanch/Secretary especially at the time of visit of some high officials.

Details of all these meetings along with the number of persons, date of meeting, agenda presented and approved by *gram sabha* are presented below:

**(Notes)**

<sup>1</sup>As per the revised Adhinyam (6) 2005, of the total voters of the Panchayat, who are members of Gram Sabha either 1/10 of them or 500 members, whichever is less, fulfill the quorum. But of 1362 adult members of Pathai panchayat. 1/10 of them will be around 136.

**Table : 3 Agenda and Decisions of Gram Sabha meetings during 2005-2009 of Pathai Panchayat**

S.No.	Meeting Date	Persons attended	Agenda presented and approved by Gram Sabha
1	2	3	4
1	09/01/06	No signature of participants	1. Land transfer from deceased to the descendent
2	26/01/06	Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch and 4 ward Members (Panch)	1. Circulation of BPL list 2. Action agenda for MNREGA 3. Annual Action Plan for other schemes 4. Identification of beneficiaries under IAY 5. Identification of beneficiaries under Balika Samridhi Yojna 6. Decision on application received under maternity benefit scheme 7. Encourage Panches to attend Gram Sabha meeting 8. Amount distribution under old age pension/Social security scheme 9. Land to landless 10. Second installment to beneficiaries under IAY
3	02/02/06	Lack of quorum led to cancellation of meeting	
4	03/02/06	Sarpanch and Up-sarpanch and 5 panch participated	1. To share information relating to preparation of Job Card under MNREGA 2. To obtain stationery
5	13/02/06	Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch, Panch and Patwari participated	1. Up-gradation of land related paper.
6	19/02/06	Sarpanch	1. Job card preparation 2. Account opening for social security / senior citizen pension holders 3. Formation of Infra-structural Development committee 4. Identification of villagers for the construction of Khet Talab
7	12/04/06	Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch and 4 panches participated	1. Preparation of Antyoday Anna Yojna (AAY) card 2. Construction of Percolation Tank 3. Road construction from Pathai to Nishana
8	12/08/06	Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch and 3 Panches participated	1. Plantation 2. Identification of persons to extend benefit under IAY 3. Identification of persons for AAY 4. Proposal for Rapta / Stop dam preparation 5. Construction of roof of temple 6. Road Construction 7. Stop dam construction 8. Stop Dam Construction

9	11/12/06	Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch and 3 Panches participated	1. Identification of families for well allotment.
			2. Well construction under MNREGA
			3. Rapta cum Stop dam construction
			4. Payment of old age pensions/Social security amount
			5. Well construction for irrigation in Plantation field
10	06/01/07	Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch and 7 Panches participated	1. Rapta cum Stop Dam Construction
			2. Rapta cum Stop Dam construction on Aam river
			3. Honorarium to <i>Kotwar</i> for informing villagers about Gram Sabha meeting
			4. Payment of old age pension / social security benefit
			5. Installation of hand pump
			6. Renewal of family register
			7. Stop dam construction
			8. Stop dam construction
			9. Stop dam construction
			10. Stop dam construction
			11. Stop dam construction
			12. Toilet in Anganwadi Bhawan
			13. Boundary wall of Anganwadi Kendra
			14. Reminder to panchs for attending meeting
			15. Economic assistance for land up-gradation
11	14/04/07	Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch and 7 Panches participated	1. Identification of beneficiaries under old age pension / Social security scheme
			2. Distribution of BPL card / verification of AAY card
			3. Rapta construction
			4. Stop dam construction
			5. Tank construction
			6. Road Construction
			7. Identification of houses for repair under IAY
			8. Well construction
			9. Stop dam under NREGS
			10. Stop dam under MNREGA
12	15/08/07	Lack of quorum led to cancellation of meeting	
13	19/08/07	Sarpanch and 54 members participated	1. Plantation of 17320 <i>Jatropha</i> seedling
			2. Identification of beneficiaries for well facility
			3. identification of households for AAY benefit
			4. Distribution of old age pension / social security benefit
			5. Construction of Choupal near Panchayat and Anganwadi Bhawan
14	23/01/08	Sarpanch, Up-sarpanch and 5 panches participated	1. Information given to villagers for the Badi Project
15	26/01/08	Sarpanch and Up-sarpanch	1. Formation of standing committee for Total Sanitation Programme, drinking water
			2. Formation of committee under Forest Rights Bill-2006
			3. Social auditing of works under MNREGA
			4. Identification of new beneficiaries under Kapil Dhara scheme
			5. Identification of beneficiaries under Bhumi Shilpa Yojna (Up-gradation)
			6. Identification of beneficiaries under Nandan fruit forestry scheme
			7. Repair and light facility in two temples
			8. Up-gradation / Modernization of Panchayat Bhawan
			9. Connecting road up-gradation
			10. Updating of household list of village
16	13/08/08	Sarpanch and 41 members participated	1. Identification fo family and community development centric projects for 2009-10
			2. Identification of beneficiaries for Kapil Dhara scheme
			3. Construction of boundary of agricultural land
			4. Construction of percolation tank
			5. Social auditing works under MNREGA
			6. Formation of vigilance/monitoring committee under MNREGA
			7. Up-gradation of household list of the village

			8. Popularization of charter prepared by the core committee formed under Panchayati-raj Adhiniyam
			9. Share information relating to developmental works going on, total expenditure and total man days employment generated.
			10. Sharing information related to work under MNREGA, Backward Area Development Scheme, SSA, Total Sanitation and MDM
			11. Action programme for Nursery establishment by one SHG
			12. Construction of Bracket (Speed breaker) in Pardhan Dhana
			13. Percolation tank in private farm.
			14. Establishment of KANJI house
			15. Construction of cemented road in the Bada Dhana
17	26/01/09	Lack of quorum led to cancellation of meeting	
18	27/01/09	Sarpanch and 75 members participated	1. Identification of family and community development centric projects for 2009-10
			2. Construction of boundary of agricultural land
			3. Construction of Common well
			4. Identification of beneficiaries under old age pension scheme
			5. Updating of household list of village
			6. Share information relating to ongoing development scheme
19	02/05/09	Lack of quorum led to cancellation of meeting	
20	15/08/09	Sarpanch and 43 members participated	1. Identification of households under AAY
			2. Identification of beneficiaries under old age pension scheme/ social security scheme
			3. Allotment of water reservoir (8.75 hectare) to the poor for fishing
			4. Establishment of Anganwadi Centre in one of the mohallas
21	23/08/09	Sarpanch and 55 members participated	1. Social audit of work done during 2006-07, 2007-8, 2008-09 and 2009-10.
			2. To share financial information related to MIS (Income-expenditure statement)
			3. To share information relating to income/expenditure of MNREGA

Note: Total Meetings of Gram Sabha organized – 21, Meeting actually held – 17 and Meeting Postponed due to lack of quorum – 04.

Source : Gram Sabha meetings related register available at Pathai Panchayat office.

Needless to mention that total 103 individual issues were presented in the meetings for discussion and approval. The record made available by panchayat secretary clearly reveals that none of these 103 agendas were either revised or rejected.

So far as, type of issues presented and approved by the meeting is concerned, of the total 103, large number of them were related to surface water

management, identification of households for different types of government schemes and overall functioning of MNREGA. Social security benefit schemes, land up-gradation issues, village road construction, construction of small stop dam etc. were also discussed and approved. Meeting also approved construction and repair of temple, purchase of stationery, instruction to panches to attend **gram sabha** meeting regularly and so on.

**Table : 4 Issue-wise number of agenda discussed and approved in Gram sabha meetings in Pathai Village**

S.No.	Issue	No. of Agenda
1	Land Management /Up-gradation	6
2	Social Security Benefit/BPL related work	8
3	Water management	16
4	Road Construction	5
5	Forestry/Environmental management	4
6	Bridge construction	5
7	House/building construction and repair	2
8	Identification of Beneficiaries under different schemes	19
9	NREGS related work /evaluation /road map preparation	12
10	Others*	27
	<b>Total</b>	<b>103</b>

Note: Others\* means encourage Panches to attend Gram Sabha meeting, issue reminder letter to panches, purchase of stationery, formation of different types of committees, construction of roof of temple and electrification work, honorarium to Kotwar for informing villagers about gram sabha meeting, renewal or up-gradation of family register, establishment of KANJI house and Aaganwadi Kendra etc.

If we analyze these two tables it is clear that none of these meetings some of the gain problems faced by villagers were discussed. Some of the important problems which cover the entire area of the Pathai gram panchayat are consumption of Mahua liquor at large scale, poor quality of teaching and learning at primary and middle schools, protection of local forest, corruption and manipulation in different rural development schemes, improvement in the land of ground water table, capacity building of tribal youth, effective functioning of primary health centre, improvement in the functioning of Public Distribution System (PDS), *Anganwadi Kendra* and so on. No attention was paid to raise income of tribal farmers from their agricultural work and management of their income. No effort was made to protect farmers from Sahpur based *Sahukars* (local money lenders) who purchase some of their farm produce at cheap rate and also charge high interest rate in case villagers take loan from them. During past few years, several Self Help Groups (SHG) were formed but except one, all of them became non-functional. Why SHG could not succeed is a serious issue but the *gram sabha* meeting had nothing to do with such issues. If we see itemwise agenda, presented and approved by gram sabha, it is clear that meetings only discussed the schemes and benefits which were supposed to be supplied by the state. No effort was made for capacity building of villagers. Also, no discussion was made on villagers contribution for overall development of the village itself. Hence, it can be said that even if gram sabha meeting is regularly held and attended by large number of villagers, it is neither self sustaining nor make villagers self reliant. The very

purpose of panchayati-raj relating to make villagers self reliant, develop initiative have been by and large ignored. No specific agenda related to development of women and children were discussed in the meetings even though sarpanch was also female. Hence, *gram sabha* almost worked like a medium for implementation to government control development with the financial support and terms and conditions did down by the state. Also, this was not taken step about rural development in different spheres in a sustainable manner

### **Achievements of Panchayat (2005-09):-**

Needless to mention that as per the provisions of 11<sup>th</sup> schedule of the Constitution, 29 items have been entrusted to Gram Panchayat. Important among these are related to land reform and land management, water management, rural housing and sanitation, rural electrification, education, health, PDS management and so on. Rajni has very little information about these schemes. She is ignored about development schemes and says that her responsibility is only to spend grant received by Pathai Panchayat. The same time she is unhappy with the under utilization of educational facilities by both students and guardians. Many parents do not send children to school in time. However, she is concerned about Mid Day Meal (MDM). To her, the main responsibility of the Panchayat is to construct road and to do whatever is to be done under MNREGA. She counted status under her leadership by the panchayat. These are related to construction of tank, percolation tank, road construction, well construction under Kapil Dhara scheme, Rapta (small bridge) cum stop dam construction, plantation etc.

Table: 5

## Developmental Work done by the Gram Panchayat 2005 to 2009

S. No	Particular of Work	Village Name				Allotment Amount (in lacs)	Expenditure (in lacs)	Balance(in lacs)
		Pathai	Nishana	Bhatand-hana	Total (3+4+5)			
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Khet Talab	5	5	1	11	2.295	2.258	0.037
2	Percolation Tank	1	1		2	8.23	8.226	0.004
3	Gravel Road Construction (Pathai to Nishana)	2		2	4	18.788	8.418	10.37
4	Construction of well in Plantation Field		1		1	1.2	0.821	0.379
5	Plantation Work	2	4	1	7	19.59	8.033	11.557
6	Kapil Dhara Well	38	10	8	56	53.9	23.289	30.611
7	Community Well		1	1	2	2.98	2.674	0.306
8	Nirmal Neer	1	1	1	3	5.04	0	5.04
9	Tank Construction	1			1	4.4	0.953	3.447
10	Bori Bandhan (For Water Conservation)	15	2	1	18	2.112	0.4	1.712
	<b>Total</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>118.535</b>	<b>55.072</b>	<b>63.463</b>

Note: During the above period total Rs. 1,18,53,500 was sanctioned by the government for the above work of which Rs. 63,46,300 is balance with the Panchayat as on March 31, 2010.

Source: Data obtained from Janpad Panchayat Sahpur, on 3/04/2010.

On the basis of the facts stated upon it is obvious that today there is no existence of informal panchayat of village elders. For all the practical purposes villagers depend upon statutory Panchayat System or other formal institutions have significantly increased. The statutory Panchayat is not at all impaired to dispute management but also it is an important change agent at the village level. Villagers have a very specific understanding of politics and politicians today. To them politics is almost like a business. People join it is largely for their personal gain both in economic and non-economic sense. In precise, her view about the panchayat is focused only on infrastructural work not for handling social issues.

### Panchayati Raj and Political Behaviour:-

It seems that of course politically Pathai is divided into two political camps i.e. Congress and the BJP, but the level of their active participation in politics is insignificant. They cast vote on the basis of both subjective and objective considerations. The level of their political awareness is also insignificant. They take some interest in panchayat level politics because representatives are personally known and they cover only local issues which are the concerns of the villagers, but as one move from Janpad Panchayat onwards their awareness, inclination, participation etc. drastically decreases. All this combined together reflect the situation of political apathy and indifference on the part of villagers even when the local level leadership is in the hands of local tribal leaders.

So far as, Gram Panchayat and its functioning is concerned, it is almost like a Government Department. It is an instrument to actualize government schemes into action. **Gram Sabha** meeting is essential for the functioning of PRI. But the meeting is hardly held. Even if meeting is organized, villagers do not participate in the deliberation. Some of them put signature in the due course as a formality. Innovative ideas and proposals are seldom discussed. The Panchayat does not take interest in social development issues like quality teaching and learning in the primary and middle school, absenteeism, consumption of Mahua liquor by most of the villagers, lawful functioning of PDS, illegal falling of trees in the local forest and so on.

### CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

In short, today panchayat has done only infrastructural work. It depends upon government funds not generate their own source of income. One of the major responsibility of panchayat is to empower women but panchayat does not achieve this responsibility. All the work done with the approval of gram sabha but now a day gram sabha meetings has not held proper and adequate manner. Due to lack of awareness, nobody has know about the role and responsibility of *gram sabha*. Hence, in order to deal with these challenges Gram Panchayat must draw its attention towards the following issues:

1. Gram Panchayat must ensure successful commencement of **Gram Sabha** meeting as and when it is organized. For this purpose Panchayat

itself needs to be made beneficial to most of the villagers. Many development packages and announcements should be made in the meeting of Gram Sabha. Also, time and place of meeting should be decided in view of its suitability to the maximum number of villagers.

2. There should be training and orientation programme for Sarpanch, Secretary and Panches on regular basis. Their level of awareness and assertiveness needs to be enhanced at the earliest. It would be fruitful if association of Sarpanch, Secretary and Panches are formed category.
3. In order to popularize power and functions of PRI help of both print and electronic media must be taken. We must remember that without making the citizens aware we cannot empower their local level representatives.
4. Today level of accountability and objectivity on the part of Panchayat at the village level especially in tribal dominated area like Pathai is insignificant. No sign of good governance is visible. This needs to be encouraged. On many occasions it is the secretary who dominates on the scene. This needs to be discouraged. Sarpanch needs to be made more active and assertive in comparison to the secretary.
5. There is rotation in the reservation available to different social groups. In one sense the provision of rotation is dysfunctional. Suppose the seat of a Sarpanch was reserved for women. Therefore, the seat was occupied by women. But in the next election the seat was de-reserved and anybody i.e. male or female, even from the tribal community is allowed to contest. The result may be either defeat or withdrawal of the women candidate. The result is near wastage of input and experience which she have had acquired during the tenure of her *sarpanchship*. Hence, even if rotation is must, it shall be done after a long interval, especially in the case of tribals, among whom the history of leadership formation in the formal sense is very short.
6. Smooth and active functioning of Gram panchayat is also determined by the amount of power enjoyed by **Panches**. Today as per the provisions of **Panchayat Raj Adhiniyam** no power lies with the **Panch** barring no confidence motion against Sarpanch. This provision, along with other inhibiting factors, make them reluctant. To avoid

this situation and to ensure their effective participation some power should also be delegated to them.

In short, Pathai is definitely aheading towards development. There is change in physical and social quality of life of the large number of villagers. But most of the factors and conditions contributing to development are exogenous. Villagers have limited access to and control over these factors and conditions. So long as villagers do not have access to and control over the sources of power in a sustained manner such as proper health, quality ridden education, entry into non-farm occupations, proper management of time and money, political awareness and participation etc; they cannot develop themselves in a sustainable manner. Today they are in search of sustainable development in the community as well as individual development.

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