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INDIA @ 2047

**Realizing the Vision of a Developed,
Equitable and Sustainable Republic**



Organised by

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
PINGLE GOVERNMENT COLLEGE
FOR WOMEN(AUTONOMOUS)
Waddepally, Hanamkonda, Telangana

PINGLE GOVERNMENT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN (A)

★ *Celebrating Daimond Jubilee Year (1965 - 2025)* ★

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Waddepally, Hanumakonda, Telangana - 506370



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About Hanumakonda District

Hanumakonda is one of the prominent districts in the state of Telangana, India. Formed in 2021 after the reorganization of districts, it was carved out of the erstwhile Warangal Urban district. Hanumakonda city serves as its administrative headquarters. The district holds significant historical, cultural, and educational importance in Telangana. Historically, Hanumakonda was part of the Kakatiya dynasty's capital during the 12th and 13th centuries. Architectural marvels like the Thousand Pillar Temple and Warangal Fort highlight its glorious past. Today, the district is a major center for education with prestigious institutions like Kakatiya University and the National Institute of Technology (NIT Warangal). Economically, Hanumakonda thrives on agriculture, education, trade, and small industries. Rich in cultural heritage, festivals like Bathukamma and Bonalu are celebrated with great enthusiasm here. Strategically located, it acts as a gateway to North Telangana, blending tradition with modern development.

About the College

Pingle Government College for Women in Hanamkonda, Waddepally, began its illustrious journey in 1965 with a building donated by the Pingle family, initially serving just 67 students and 11 staff. Starting with Arts, Commerce, and Science, the institution quickly expanded. By 1966-67, it introduced degree courses like B.A. (H.P.P., E.P.P.) and B.Sc. (B.Z.C.) in both English and Telugu media, coming under Kakatiya University's jurisdiction. The phenomenal growth of the institution has been crucial in catering to the diverse needs of socio-economically disadvantaged women students. Adding to its distinctions, the college achieved NAAC 'A' Grade accreditation in 2017, was conferred with Autonomous status in 2021, and is recognized as a Research Center by Kakatiya University. Now a recognized Cluster College, it offers a broad spectrum of 26 U.G., 10 P.G., and 24 Certificate courses. From the modest start of 67 students in 1965, the college blossomed over the decades, expanding its branches like a mighty tree to embrace a vibrant community of 1600 students in 2025, continually nurturing the educational aspirations of young women, while proudly celebrating its Diamond Jubilee.

About the Department

The Department of Political Science educates students on the political ideas, theories, and institutions shaping national and global politics. Established in 1965 as part of the B.A. program, its motto is 'Virtue is Knowledge'. The department focuses on empowering girl students through quality teaching, robust research, and vibrant co-curricular activities. Beyond academics, it aids in holistic development through initiatives like the Voters Club,

On-Campus Job Training (OCJT), and 'We the People of India', the public awareness program. To develop skills like communication, critical thinking, and analytical abilities, the department organizes Seminars, Workshops, Debates, and Field Visits. The B.A. HEP (Special) course enhances subject scope with advanced topics such as Politics and Media, Psephology, Report Writing, and a Feminist Understanding of Politics.

About the Seminar

India's journey since independence has been a remarkable story of resilience, democracy, and transformation. As the nation approaches its centenary of independence in 2047, it is imperative to reflect upon the pathways that will guide India toward becoming a developed, equitable, and sustainable republic. The vision of "India @ 2047" is a comprehensive blueprint for a future that is not only economically prosperous but also socially just, environmentally resilient, and built upon a mature democracy. We'll explore the strategic pillars that will enable India to achieve this ambitious goal, moving beyond traditional growth metrics to embrace a more holistic and inclusive model. The discourse will centre on fostering a developed republic where every citizen's dignity is protected, has access to opportunities and endowed with capabilities, a 'sustainable model of political system' that ensures growth, protects our planet, and an equitable society that ensures the benefits of progress reach the last mile. This National Seminar seeks to provide a multidisciplinary platform for academicians, policymakers, researchers, and students to deliberate on strategies and policies that can shape India's future.

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IJMER, Journal of Multidisciplinary Educational Research, concentrates on critical and creative research in multidisciplinary traditions. This journal seeks to promote original research and cultivate a fruitful dialogue between old and new thought.

Prof. K. Prathap Reddy
M.Sc. Ph.D.
Vice Chancellor
Kakatiya University, Warangal - 506 009



MESSAGE

I am pleased to note that Pingle Government College for Women (A), Hanumakonda, is organising a National Seminar on “India @ 2047: Realizing the Vision of a Developed, Equitable and Sustainable Republic”, a theme that resonates deeply with the national vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047. India’s post-independence journey has been one of resilience, democracy, and transformation, and as we approach the centenary of Independence, it is imperative to reflect on pathways that ensure prosperity, justice, sustainability, and a mature democracy for all citizens.

The seminar’s focus on political, economic, social, environmental, and technological dimensions - along with its emphasis on social justice, inclusion, good governance, and India’s global role - provides a rich, multidisciplinary platform to generate policy-relevant ideas and research for India @2047. In doing so, it aligns with the larger national effort to move beyond narrow growth metrics toward a holistic and inclusive development model that reaches the last mile.

At the same time, this initiative is deeply rooted in the spirit of “# 1 Telangana Raising”. Hanumakonda—historically linked to the Kakatiya legacy and today a vibrant educational hub with institutions like Kakatiya University and NIT Warangal-symbolises the blend of heritage and modern aspirations that define Telangana’s development trajectory. The Diamond Jubilee of Pingle Government College for Women, and its remarkable growth in empowering socio-economically disadvantaged women learners, is itself a powerful statement of Telangana’s commitment to inclusive and equitable progress.

I am confident that the deliberations of this seminar will contribute meaningfully to shaping both Viksit Bharat @ 2047 and a leading, progressive Telangana grounded in constitutional values and social justice.

Date :06-12-2025

Best regards,

Prof.K. Pratap Reddy

Prof. B. Sudhakar Reddy

Honorary Director,
ICSSR - Southern Regional Centre

MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to extend my warm greetings to the Department of Political Science, Pingle Government College for Women (A), Hanumakonda, on the occasion of the Two-Day National Seminar on the theme "**India @2047: Realizing the Vision of a Developed, Equitable and Sustainable Republic**" 11th & 12th December, 2025.

As India approaches the centenary of its independence, the coming decades hold tremendous promise and responsibility. Vision 2047 calls upon scholars, policymakers, and citizens alike to rethink developmental priorities, strengthen democratic institutions, and ensure that progress is both inclusive and sustainable. This seminar, therefore, provides a timely and meaningful platform to engage in critical reflection on the political, social, economic, and environmental dimensions that will shape India's future.

The involvement of young researchers and faculty members in such academic deliberations is especially significant. Their fresh insights and scholarly rigor are essential for envisioning pathways that uphold equity, justice, ecological balance, and the constitutional ethos that binds our republic. I am confident that the discussions held here will contribute to a deeper understanding of India's long-term aspirations and inspire innovative policy perspectives.

I appreciate the sustained efforts of the organizers, the distinguished resource persons, and the participants who have come together to make this national seminar possible. The ICSSR-Southern Regional Centre is pleased to support this academic initiative and remains committed to encouraging research that strengthens our nation's intellectual and developmental foundations.

I extend my best wishes for the success of the seminar and hope that it results in valuable ideas and meaningful scholarly contributions.

Prof. B. Sudhakar Reddy

Prof. V. Balakista Reddy

Chairman

Telangana Council of Higher Education (TGCHE)

MESSAGE

I am glad to know that the Department of Chemistry, Pingle Government College for women (Autonomous), Hanumakonda, is organizing a TGCHE Sponsored Two-day National Seminar on '**Recent Trends and Emerging Technologies in Chemical and Allied Sciences for Research**' (RTECASR-2025) on 22nd & 23rd Aug 2025 sponsored by the Telnahana Higher Education Council.

Chemistry and its allied sciences are rapidly evolving with the advent of advanced technologies, and this seminar serves as a timely initiative to explore new ideas, share knowledge, and build academic networks that transcend institutional boundaries. I hope this seminar will be helpful for fostering innovation, collaboration, and critical thinking among students, researchers, and faculty.

The commitment of the organizing team to bring together eminent scientists, academicians, and young researchers is truly commendable. I am confident that the deliberations during these two days will ignite fresh perspectives and inspire meaningful research that aligns with global scientific advancements.

I congratulate the Principal, convener and Department of Chemistry and the entire organizing committee for their dedication and vision in conducting this seminar. I extend my best wishes for its grand success and hope that the outcomes of this event will contribute significantly to the academic and research excellence of the institution and the participants alike.

(Prof. P. Bala Bhaskar)
Joint Director (FAC) & AGO
Commissioner of Collegiate Education
Govt. of Telangana

Prof. V. Ramachandram

M.Sc. Ph.D.

Registrar

Kakatiya University, Warangal - 506 009



MESSAGE

I am pleased to extend my warm greetings to the organizers and participants of this National Seminar hosted by the Department of Political Science. The chosen theme- "*India @2047: Realizing the Vision of a Developed, Equitable and Sustainable Republic*" - is both timely and of significant national relevance. As India prepares to enter the centenary year of its Independence, such academic engagements become crucial for evaluating our progress and envisioning the path ahead.

Pingle Government College for Women (A) has always encouraged scholarship that combines academic rigour with social responsibility. In this spirit, the seminar's focus on strengthening liberal democracy, reinforcing constitutional values, promoting inclusive development, and ensuring social and economic equity aligns closely with your institutional commitment to nation-building. As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar reminded us, "**Democracy is not a form of government, but a form of social organization.**" This seminar provides an important platform to reflect on that vision.

The discussions and research contributions emerging from this event will not only enrich academic understanding but also serve as valuable inputs for policymakers, administrators, and civil society practitioners. I appreciate the efforts of the Convener, Organizing Committee, faculty, and student volunteers for their dedication in bringing together experts from diverse fields for meaningful deliberation.

I extend my best wishes to all the distinguished speakers, participants, and researchers. May this seminar pave the way for informed dialogue, constructive ideas, and a renewed commitment to shaping a developed and just India by 2047.

Best regards,

Date :06-12-2025

Prof.V.Ramachandram



PINGLE GOVERNMENT COLLEGE FOR WOMEN (A)

Waddepally, Hanumakonda - 506 370.

(Re-Accredited with 'A' Grade by NAAC)



Lt. Prof. B. Chandramouli

M.Sc. Ph.D.
Principal



MESSAGE

I am delighted to present this brochure for the National Seminar organized by the Department of Political Science on 11th & 12th December 2025. The theme, "*India @2047: Realizing the Vision of a Developed, Equitable and Sustainable Republic*," is both timely and nationally significant. As India moves toward the centenary of its Independence, it becomes imperative for academic institutions to actively participate in shaping the discourse on our nation's future.

This seminar provides an exceptional platform for academicians, researchers, policymakers, media professionals, and students to critically reflect on the pathways that will guide India into a new era of progress. A developed India cannot be envisioned without strong democratic institutions, inclusive governance, sustainable growth, and unwavering commitment to constitutional values. As Dr. B.R. Ambedkar aptly stated, "**The Constitution is not a mere lawyers' document, it is a vehicle of life.**" Our discussions and deliberations must contribute to strengthening this vehicle.

The seminar intends to explore multiple dimensions—liberal democracy, constitutionalism, economic development, social justice, climate resilience, digital transformation, and equitable opportunities for all sections of society. I am confident that the outcomes of these sessions will not only enrich academic understanding but also offer valuable insights for governance reforms and nation-building efforts.

I congratulate the Department of Political Science, the Convener, Organizing Committee, and student volunteers for their dedicated efforts in planning this seminar. I also extend a warm welcome to all distinguished speakers and delegates who have graciously accepted our invitation.

May this seminar inspire fresh perspectives, stimulate meaningful debate, and contribute to the collective aspiration of building a *Viksit Bharat* by 2047.

Wishing the seminar great success.

Jai Hind.

(Lt. Dr. B. Chandramouli)

Dr. M. Samuel Praveen Kumar

Asst. Professor of Political Science & Convenor of the Seminar
Pingle Government College for Women (A), Hanumakonda.



CONVENER'S MESSAGE

It gives me immense pleasure to present this Souvenir, a compilation of abstracts that reflect the intellectual spirit and scholarly commitment embodied in our National Seminar, *"India @2047: Realizing the Vision of a Developed, Equitable and Sustainable Republic."* This seminar arrives at a critical moment in India's journey—when our democracy stands mature, our institutions resilient, and our aspirations aligned toward building a nation that is not merely prosperous, but also just, inclusive, and sustainable.

In his final speech to the Constituent Assembly, Dr. B. R. Ambedkar offered a timeless reminder: **"However good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it happen to be a bad lot."** His words continue to serve as both a warning and a guiding principle—emphasizing that the future of our Republic rests not only on institutional design but equally on the moral integrity, civic responsibility, and constitutional commitment of its citizens and leaders.

As we look toward 2047, the centenary of our independence, we are compelled to reflect on the structural foundations that sustain a strong democracy. In this regard, the insight of Francis Fukuyama is instructive when he observes that **"a modern political order rests on a balance between a capable state, the rule of law, and democratic accountability."** These three pillars—state capacity, justice, and accountability—summarize the pathway India must continue to strengthen as it seeks to emerge as a fully developed nation.

The pathway to India's future will not be marked merely by economic growth, technological advancement, or demographic strength. It will be shaped by our ability to cultivate institutions that uphold equality, by policies that reduce disparities, and by a civic culture that values dialogue, inclusion, and sustainability. A developed India must be an equitable India, and an equitable India must be a sustainable one. These three ambitions are not independent goals; they are mutually reinforcing pillars of a strong Republic.

The research contributions presented in this Souvenir offer valuable insights into these interlinked challenges. They highlight emerging perspectives, interrogate existing paradigms, and propose innovative approaches to governance, development, and social justice. I am confident that the discussions inspired by these works will contribute meaningfully to our collective effort to envision and realize an India that stands as a model of democratic success in the 21st century.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to ICSSR–SRC and TGCHE for their generous support, to all paper presenters for their scholarly engagement, and to the Organizing Committee whose tireless efforts made this seminar possible. Above all, I hope that this Souvenir inspires continued research, critical thinking, and collaborative action—attributes essential for shaping the India of 2047 and beyond.

Let us commit ourselves to strengthening our Republic, deepening our democracy, and realizing an India that fulfills the promise of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity for all

(Dr. Samuel Praveen Kumar)

CONTENTS

| Sl. No. | NAME OF THE AUTHOR | TITLE | Page No |
|---------|--|--|---------|
| 1 | Dr. G. Krishnaiah | Identity Politics in Telangana - An Analytical Overview | 1 |
| 2 | Dr. P. Jayapal Reddy | Building Digital India: Integrating AI, Data Governance, and Scientific Innovation for Inclusive Transformation | 9 |
| 3 | Prof.V.Ramchandram and Dr.K. Chaithanya Kumar | Challenges And Opportunities of Artificial Intelligence In E-Governance in India | 15 |
| 4 | Dr. B. Kavitha, and Dr. K.Mallesham, | Skill Enhancement Programmes in India – Issues and Challenges | 21 |
| 5 | Jampana Suraiah | Dynamics of Coalition Governments in India- A Perspective of Policy Implication | 29 |
| 6 | Dr. M. Samuel Praveen Kumar | Revisiting the Basic Structure Doctrine: Legal Strategies for Protecting India's Democratic Ethos Towards To 2047. | 40 |
| 7 | Dr. M. Prashanthi | The Impact of Urbanization on Biodiversity: A Study of Urban Ecosystems | 44 |
| 8 | Pranav Abishai Moses | The Triad Challenge: Balancing Development, Equity, and Sustainability in India's Centennial Year. | 51 |
| 9 | Dr.Sankineni Venkataiah | New Dimension of the Indian democracy | 60 |
| 10 | Dr. Chanda Apparao | Cropping Intensity and Irrigation Sources: A Case Study of Telangana | 69 |
| 11 | Prof. B.Venkateswara Reddy | Role and Challenges of Media and civil society in Strengthening Democracy | 78 |
| 12 | N. Srinivasa Rao | 33 Years Journey Of 73 rd Constitution Amendment Act | 84 |
| 13 | Dr. Rakki Reddy Adi Reddy and Prof. B. Chandramouli | The Role of Media and Civil Society in Strengthening Democracy | 89 |
| 14 | Dr. Sundararao Marsakatla and Dr. G. Suresh Babu | India @2047: Realizing the Vision of a Developed, Equitable and Sustainable Republic | 92 |

| | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|--|-----|
| 15 | Dr, K. Prabhudass | Remote Voting-A Key Reform: Analysis (A Study on Electoral Reforms in India) | 95 |
| 16 | Rubeena | Sustainable Development In India: Progress And Future Challenges | 100 |
| 17 | Pagadala Saritha | Role of Digital India Program In Strengthening Good Governance – A Study | 106 |
| 18 | Dr. K. Yesudasu | Evolution of Federalism In India: Challenges And Prospects | 113 |
| 19 | Hajeera khanum Sarvani | Indigenous Knowledge and Environmental Ethics: A Comprehensive Study | 120 |
| 20 | Dr. P. Padma | Role of MSMEs in India's Growth Vision 2047 | 125 |
| 21 | Smt. G. Jyotsna Rani | India's Experience with Constitutional Democracy and Human Rights | 129 |
| 22 | C Jagadeeshwar Reddy | Strengthening Grassroots Democracy: Panchayat Raj Institutions and Governance Reforms in India's Journey to 2047 | 136 |
| 23 | Dr. D. Sabitha | Bridging Digital Divide and Ecological Wisdom: ICT-Enabled Natural Resource Governance and Livelihood Transformation of Lambada Women in Telangana | 146 |
| 24 | Dr. Susmita Mohapatra | From Margins to Mainstream: Women's Historical Journey and Future Role in India's Sustainable Development Vision @2047 | 155 |
| 25 | G. Madhusudhana Reddy | Democratic Deepening Through Local Governance: Revitalizing Panchayat Raj Institutions for India@2047 | 165 |

Dr. K. VICTOR BABU

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Editorial.....

It is heartening to note that our journal is able to sustain the enthusiasm and covering various facets of knowledge. It is our hope that IJMER would continue to live up to its fullest expectations savoring the thoughts of the intellectuals associated with its functioning .Our progress is steady and we are in a position now to receive evaluate and publish as many articles as we can. The response from the academicians and scholars is excellent and we are proud to acknowledge this stimulating aspect.

The writers with their rich research experience in the academic fields are contributing excellently and making IJMER march to progress as envisaged. The interdisciplinary topics bring in a spirit of immense participation enabling us to understand the relations in the growing competitive world. Our endeavour will be to keep IJMER as a perfect tool in making all its participants to work to unity with their thoughts and action.

The Editor thanks one and all for their input towards the growth of the **Knowledge Based Society**. All of us together are making continues efforts to make our predictions true in making IJMER, a Journal of Repute

Dr.K.Victor Babu
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IDENTITY POLITICS IN TELANGANA - AN ANALYTICAL OVERVIEW

Dr. G. Krishnaiah,

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science,
Kakatiya University, Warangal, Telangana, India

Abstract

Society is a diverse and complex mixture of various cultures, Languages, religions, and castes, often described as a “Unity in diversity.” It is characterized by a layered Social structure that includes people from rural, urban, and tribal settings, and is shaped by both traditional values and modern influences. Key features include its pluralism, a sense of shared identity despite differences, and the coexistence of distant cultural, linguistic, and religious groups. Identity politics is based on a particular identity, such as ethnicity, race, Nationality, religion, denomination, political affiliation, caste, age, education, disability, opinion, intelligence, and Social class. Identity politics in Telangana is rooted in the demand for a separate state, which was built on the unique regional identity of its people, culture, and dialect. The politics are shaped by regional pride, Caste dynamics, and symbols, with the Telangana Rastra Samithi (TRS). Now it's BRS, heavily relying on this regional identity for support. Other political actors like the AIMIM also engage in identity politics, representing a specific group like Muslims.

Keywords: *TRS, BRS Political Mobilization, Identity Politics, Telangana, Regional Identity, Telangana Movement*

Statement of the Problem

The political mobilization of individuals based on shared traits—ethnicity, language, religion, caste, geography, gender, or other indicators of collective identity—is known as identity politics. These identities have a significant impact on collective action and political consciousness in multicultural societies such as India. Telangana, which was separated from Andhra Pradesh in 2014 following decades of protest, provides an interesting example of how regional identity can serve as the basis for political activism. Telangana's fight for statehood was more than just an administrative struggle; it was an assertion of regional identity based on a sense of socioeconomic backwardness, cultural uniqueness, and historical neglect. Identity politics in the area have expanded over time to include religious beliefs, linguistic distinctions (mainly the Telangana dialect), caste identities (most notably OBCs, Dalits, and Reddys), and regional symbols.

On June 2, 2014, Telangana became the 29th state in the Indian Union. It was separated from the pre-existing united Andhra Pradesh, which was established on November 1st, 1956. Three aspects of Indian politics have triumphed with the Telangana movement's victory and the creation of the Telangana state: a) identity, b) representation, and c) democracy. We will try to go into more detail about them in the sections that follow.

The Telangana demand essentially originated from the Telangana people's identity, culture, dialect, and general personality. It is not predicated on complaints about backwardness. Because even before the state was established, the districts that now make up Telangana were highly developed. For instance, they are significantly more advanced than Andhra's north coastal regions, like



Vijayanagaram and Srikakulam. As a result, it is somewhat misleading to say that the Telangana demand was motivated by complaints of economic backwardness. The Telangana people's identity was crucial to the demand for a separate state.

Representation is the second dimension that emerged victorious with the creation of Telangana. In essence, it was a political question. For a considerable amount of time, Telangana's citizens and political leaders were not allowed to participate in united Andhra Pradesh politics. This indicates that despite the existence of formal liberal democratic structures, elected officials were never given the authority or responsibility to look out for their constituents and the people they represented within the United AP. Leaders from Coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema have always held political power. The success of the Telangana demand was the real, rather than merely formal, political representation of a region.

Sub-Regional Politics

Democracy was the third element that emerged victorious with the creation of Telangana. The formation of the state within the Union was largely peaceful and democratic. There were only a few isolated instances of violence or bloodshed during the establishment of the state. Clearly, Indian democracy has succeeded in peacefully satisfying a long-standing demand. The process of articulating the demand and organizing people to support it was both fully democratic and carried out within the confines of Indian democracy. Throughout the mobilization process, there was no violence of any kind, including rioting and arson. The Telangana Joint Action Committee (TJAC) has been instrumental in this.

In some ways, post-Telangana state politics can be compared to politics in post-colonial countries because these three aspects were perceived as blocked, if not suppressed. This can be interpreted in two ways: first, the source or sources of perceived oppression are no longer in positions of authority; and second, the sub-region's politics are starting over, inspiring a great deal of hope and vigor. These hopes and energies are passed down to TRS, the party that spearheaded the independent Telangana movement. It is comparable to the new start made in a post-colonial state when the colonial oppressor departs, and the new local leaders take over. Similar to many postcolonial countries, no other party in the state is as powerful or well-supported as the party that spearheaded the movement for Telangana's independence. As a result, it is a one-party dominant state, with TRS as the main ruling party and little to no opposition in the state assembly. When the Indian nation gained independence, the Congress party also experienced this. But over time, opposition and democracy grew stronger. Because of this, the party that spearheaded the separate statehood movement benefits from all of the support that the movement brought to the government.

Pre-Independence and Early Post-Independence Period

Telangana's unique historical trajectory under the Nizam's rule is the source of its distinct regional identity. The Telangana region was merged into the princely state of Hyderabad, in contrast to the Andhra region, which was directly administered by the British as part of the Madras Presidency. Telangana was distinct from the rest of what would later become Andhra Pradesh due to the fundamental differences in political administration that shaped socioeconomic structures, cultural practices, and political consciousness.



Distinct Administrative Systems

Under the Nizam, Hyderabad State operated as a separate princely state with its own army, currency, and judiciary. In contrast to British-administered regions, where contemporary bureaucratic reforms, English education, and representative institutions had gained more traction, governance was carried out through a centralized and highly stratified administrative system. Telugu, which is widely spoken in Telangana, was not promoted in official settings; instead, Persian and later Urdu were used as administrative languages. Telangana and the Andhra region, where Telugu had already gained prominence in administration, literature, and education, became separated linguistically and administratively as a result.

Separate Linguistic–Cultural Environment

In terms of culture, Telangana developed customs, dialects, and practices that were different from those of coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. After centuries of interaction under the Nizam's rule, the Telangana dialect of Telugu developed with significant influences from Persian and Deccani Urdu. In this setting, local storytelling forms and folk traditions like Bonalu and Bathukamma flourished, giving the area a distinct cultural identity. The Andhra region, on the other hand, underwent cultural modernization earlier due to the emergence of print media, reform movements, and a Telugu dialect that was more Sanskritized. The Telangana identity movement was later shaped by these linguistic and cultural differences, with activists claiming that the region had a distinctive cultural legacy that was not sufficiently acknowledged in the unified state.

Feudal Structures and Socio-Economic Conditions

The persistence of feudal land-tenure systems, particularly the Patel–Patwari system, was a defining characteristic of Telangana during the Nizam era. Village-level officials, such as Patels and Patwaris, had considerable authority over rural administration and land revenue under this system. Tenant farmers, landless laborers, and marginalized caste groups were overexploited as a result of the concentration of land in the hands of Jagirdars (feudal lords), Deshmukhs, and Doras. High taxes, arbitrary evictions, and forced labor (vettichakiri) were prevalent. Compared to the Andhra region, where land reforms and early nationalist mobilization had already undermined traditional feudal structures by the early 20th century, Telangana had far more entrenched exploitative agrarian relations. The Nizam's socioeconomic injustices created a solid basis for opposition and mass uprisings in the ensuing decades.

The Telangana Armed Struggle (1946–51)

The Telangana Armed Struggle (1946–51) was one of the most important pre-Independence events influencing Telangana's political consciousness. The movement, which was mainly led by the Communist Party of India (CPI), aimed to overthrow feudal rule and repressive landlordism. Peasants in districts like Karimnagar, Nalgonda, and Warangal were inspired to fight against: Bonded labor • Revenue practices that discriminate Grain levies that are imposed • The use of force and violence by feudal lords. Many villages were freed from feudal rule as a result of the conflict, which also helped Telangana's rural populace develop a strong tradition of resistance. Even though it came to an end



with the 1948 police action (Operation Polo) and Hyderabad State's subsequent accession to the Indian Union.

Emergence of Regional Distinctiveness

The cumulative effect of these historical experiences—distinct governance, cultural identity, socio-economic oppression under feudal systems, and armed resistance—created a strong sense of regional distinctiveness among the people of Telangana. This sense of identity contributed to the perception that Telangana's development trajectory and socio-cultural needs differed markedly from those of coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema.

Thus, when the proposal for the formation of a unified Andhra Pradesh emerged in the 1950s, Telangana's leaders and populace expressed apprehensions about merging with a region that had developed under a very different administrative and socio-political environment. These early concerns laid the foundation for later agitations, making the Telangana identity not just culturally rooted but also historically and politically shaped.

Perceptions and Policies of the Government

Throughout the Telangana movement, which claimed that the coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema people had taken away the majority of government jobs, employment has been a major concern. In fact, the demand for government jobs for locals marked the beginning of the first Telangana movement. This started with what is referred to as the "Mulki rule," which prioritizes sons of the soil over others. Successive governments overrode this rule. The problem of G.O. has also arisen since then. 610 to employ locals for government positions, but the Congress and Telugu Desam-led governments that followed disregarded this. (Unfortunately, we are unable to share information about the regional distribution of government jobs because it is too sensitive.) As a result, during the Telangana statehood movement, government employment and its effects on state resources became a significant political issue. Meeting Telangana residents' aspirations for employment in the public sector is a significant duty of the new administration.

Since the majority of Telangana's agriculture is rain-fed and droughts are a common occurrence, irrigation is essential. The lives and livelihoods of farmers have been severely impacted by these droughts. Since 1997, Telangana has also seen farmer suicides. Heavily indebted cotton farmers were mostly responsible for these. Farmers' lives are now less vulnerable due to the strong influence of market forces in agriculture. On the one hand, Telangana farmers, like those in the majority of India's rainfed areas, are susceptible to droughts and a shortage of water for irrigation. However, the same dry-land farming is fully incorporated into and impacted by the capitalist market. Nearly 80 to 85 percent of farmers are small farmers who are susceptible to changes in input and output markets and rainfall, according to the most recent Telangana Human Development Report. Farmers have been taking their own lives whenever these swings are severe. Various media perspectives give varying numbers, from 1,000 to 2,500, since the creation of the new state. Although local and national media have occasionally brought attention to this issue, there is no official or academic report on these suicides. Thus, it is impossible to overstate the significance of Mission Kakatiya in these situations.

In terms of employment, agriculture, irrigation, and additional decentralization, the TRS has been making a lot of promises. Among these, the creation of jobs also depends on the expansion of private industry, which needs new funding to establish factories and other businesses. However, increasing



irrigation is closely related to agricultural development, and this necessitates resolving river water issues with other states, particularly the newly formed Andhra Pradesh. The TRS has been in constant communication with the neighboring Andhra Pradesh about irrigation, while making every effort to attract capital to launch industries. However, it is too difficult to immediately fulfill the commitments made in the areas of employment and agriculture/irrigation.

"Mission Bhageeratha" has been undertaken to enhance the supply of drinking water to every village via a central water grid. The construction of enormous water pipelines across the state is the goal of this ambitious project. When this project is finished, Telangana's right to drinking water should become a reality. Given the availability but underutilization of water in the Krishna and Godavari rivers, Telangana would become the first state to provide piped water in all rural homes around the clock and to supply potable drinking water to all villages at a reasonable cost.

AIMIM plays a significant role in Telangana's religious identity politics, particularly in Hyderabad, which has a large Muslim population. After Telangana's formation, the party's influence grew due to its strategic alliance with TRS/BRS and its strong hold over the Old City constituencies. AIMIM positions itself as a defender of Muslim rights, focusing on minority welfare, education, housing, and urban development. Critics argue that its identity-based politics deepens communal divides, limiting broader integration. However, supporters emphasize that AIMIM provides an important political platform for Muslims, ensuring representation, protecting community interests, and amplifying minority voices within Telangana's governance structure.

Impact of Identity Politics on Telangana Society

Telangana's social and political landscape has been profoundly influenced by identity politics. Positively, it has guaranteed targeted welfare for groups like Dalits, OBCs, and Muslims, strengthened marginalized communities, and revitalized local culture. In addition to boosting regional pride, the declaration of Telangana's unique identity aided in post-statehood development projects. But identity politics has also exacerbated religious and caste divisions, promoted competitive mobilization, and occasionally encouraged regional chauvinism. Identity-based political alliances have strengthened polarization while also forming new social coalitions. In general, identity politics continues to have a significant impact on social cohesiveness, political behavior, and governance.

Telangana Movement and Politics

The formation of the Telangana state by the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh depends on the initiation of National parties like the Indian National Congress, Bharatiya Janata Party, Communist Party of India, and CPI (M) Communist Party of India (Marxist). And other regional parties in the country. The Congress party has been at the steering of Andhra Pradesh state affairs since the Unified state of A.P. This party was in power in the state from 1952 to 1983, 1989 to 1994, and 2004 to 2008 and 2009 onwards. This is the only state in South India where, Congress party can form a state government on its own majority. The role of the Congress party in the state formation becomes very prominent. But the party has gained a doubtful name for its mischievous tactics to gain political advantage and suppress the movement of Telangana statehood. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has also been playing its role in the Telangana statehood since 1998. Communist Party of India and CPI (M), Communist Party of India (Marxist), being national parties, opposed the formation of the



Telangana state. However, CPI changed its stance and participated in the Telangana movement recently after the 2009 movement.

Politics and Identity

The lack of a strong opposition is a significant factor in Telangana state politics today. We say credible opposition because both the Telugu Desam Party and the Congress Party continuously opposed the state's division during their lengthy previous rule, even though the Congress Party at the center ultimately agreed to the demand for statehood. An opposition is necessary for democracy in order to criticize and balance the ruling party. The Telugu Desam Party and the Indian National Congress, the two major opposition parties, are somewhat present in the new state. Together, the Congress and TDP+BJP hold 41 seats in the legislature and received 47.1% of the vote in the 2014 elections.

In contrast to the tremendous power of identity politics unleashed by the TRS on one side and the juggernaut of growing capitalism in the state on the other, the left parties, which historically had some presence in the state, are in a weak position both electorally and morally. The state's ruling party, TRS, is also skilled at continuously using the Telangana identity card to demonize its rivals. Any person or group that criticizes the TRS becomes an enemy of the Telangana state and Telangana identity in the current one-party state. A state of emotionally charged identity politics makes it simple to demonize political rivals.

Opposition marginalization has historical roots. Either the TDP or the Congress controlled the United States of Andhra Pradesh. The Telangana region was marginalized under both the Congress and the TDP, and Telangana-born political leaders were treated poorly. For instance, the Telangana region has never had a Chief Minister serve a full term. Under the Congress and TDP administrations, Telangana's demands for irrigation water and jobs in the public sector were also disregarded. The fight for statehood was centered around these very issues. "Neellu, Niyaamakalu, Nidhulu" refers to the fair distribution of "water, employment, and resources." The TDP's leadership has come from coastal Andhra, while the Congress's leadership has come from both coastal Andhra and Rayalaseema. As a result, both the Congress and the TDP were accused of marginalizing the Telangana people and leaders when the separate state demand was made. As a result, when the new state of Telangana was established, these two parties' electoral fortunes were not very good. As a result, they were unable to form a strong opposition when Telangana State's new government was established. Because of this, Telangana is currently dominated by a single regional party, Telangana Rashtra Samiti, and neither a national party like the Congress nor a regional party like the TDP has a significant opposition.

2014 saw the holding of general elections and the formation of Telangana state. One significant aspect of the results of these general elections is that the BJP-led government and a BJP-dominant coalition replaced the previous UPA-led coalition regime at the national level. This caused significant changes in Indian politics and presented the party-led states in the region with challenging obstacles. Should they ally with the opposition or the BJP? With the BJP winning a resounding majority, the regional parties' previous strategic role in multi-party coalitions has also diminished. In this regard, the Telangana Rashtra Samiti avoided the Indian National Congress and the BJP following its election victory.



The Union and State governments share a strong interest in luring private capital for investment and adhering to the capitalist model of development. The general outlines of the development policies implemented by the Union government also apply to Telangana because Telangana is an integral part of the Union. Nonetheless, the Telangana government has some autonomy in enacting its own policies because it is a state in a quasi-federal union. We argue that compared to the Union government, these policies have been more pro-poor. Social Security's pension and disability benefits are a well-known example. These include health subsidies in private hospitals, small funds for the marriage of girls for families with girls of marriageable age, and pensions for the elderly. When it comes to putting these provisions into practice, Telangana state is ahead of the Union government. The Telangana government is more pro-poor or "populist" than the Union government for a variety of reasons covered in the preceding sections, including the nature of identity politics, the emergence of a particular kind of social structure, and the nature of the political movements that exist in Telangana. Implementing these policies won't be too difficult because Telangana is a state with a surplus budget.

Conclusion

To deadline, the TRS government has adequately satisfied the people's emotional and symbolic needs for identity recognition. It still needs to overcome the obstacle of giving its citizens the tangible advantages that come with creating a distinct state. Employment, irrigation, agriculture, and additional decentralization are some of these advantages. There has been some progress on these fronts, but much more work remains. The issue of farmer suicides in Telangana is confusing. Additionally, we contended that Telangana must address the issues of modernity, civil society, and post-colonial political society.

The state has only been in existence for two years. Nonetheless, we have maintained that managing Telangana identity, satisfying public expectations following the state's creation, handling pressure from internal political movements within the state, and handling Union politics are the main characteristics of state politics. Under the general heading of the development policy adopted within the Union, we have argued that these pressures result in the adoption of more "populist" or pro-poor development policies and politics. Politics and development will probably resemble those of any other state dominated by a regional party, like Punjab or Tamil Nadu, for a considerable amount of time to come. The only possible exception is that, in contrast to Tamil Nadu, Telangana may only have one regional party, making it resemble other states with a single regional party. The development model will be a capitalist development path that combines pro-poor policies with strong identity and symbolic politics. This is still a developing story that takes place in the context of a peasant economy dominated by agriculture, a weak civil society, and a weak opposition in the state assembly.

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BUILDING DIGITAL INDIA: INTEGRATING AI, DATA GOVERNANCE, AND SCIENTIFIC INNOVATION FOR INCLUSIVE TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

Digital transformation of India is one of the most remarkable national programs of the 21st century, the goal of which is to build a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The paper discusses the combination of artificial intelligence (AI), data governance models, and scientific innovation as the major pillars of the inclusive digital transformation in India. This paper provides an evaluation of the Digital India programme (2015), the India AI Mission (2024, ₹10,370 crore), and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act of 2023 as the basics of this change. India has continued to record impressive growth in the area of digital adoption, with over 806 million internet users as of January 2025, and UPI transactions projected to reach 200 trillion in FY 2024. Nonetheless, major issues remain, such as the urban-rural digital divide, in which only 83.3% of the rural population has access to the internet as opposed to 91.6% in the urban population, low levels of R&D investment of 0.64 of GDP, and gaps in digital literacy. The article uses a qualitative analysis framework that utilizes government reports, international indices, and empirical evidence to determine how effective the digital ecosystem in India is. The results indicate that, although India has the highest rate of penetration of AI skills in the world, and has effectively implemented digital public infrastructure, such as Aadhaar, UPI, and BHASHINI, its citizens would need to overcome the gap between infrastructural distribution, enforce stronger data protection, and invest significantly into research and development to truly transform into become inclusive truly. The research paper concludes with policy recommendations based on multi-stakeholder alliances, rural-specific interventions, and responsible AI governance to ensure equal digital access for the diverse Indian population of 1.46 billion people.

Keywords: *Digital India, Artificial Intelligence, Data Governance, Digital Transformation, Inclusive Growth, UPI, DPDP Act, and India AI Mission.*

Statement of the Problem

This digital revolution has been unique in the 21st century and has essentially transformed the economies, societies, and structures of governance globally. India, having 1.46 billion people as of January 2025, is on the frontline of this change and has an ambitious agenda to establish a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy (Data Report, 2025). Digital India, which started its activities on July 1, 2015, is a program of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that is seen as a foundation of India's vision to make government services available electronically through better internet connectivity and improvements in online infrastructure throughout the country (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology [MEIT], 2023).

Artificial intelligence, combined with well-developed data governance and science-based innovation, has become a key to inclusive digital transformation. The fact that the India AI Mission was approved in March 2024 with a large allocation of ₹10,370 crore in the next five years indicates that the



government is willing to use AI in developing the nation (Press Information Bureau [PIB], 2025). At the same time, in August 2023, the Digital Personal Data Protection Act was also approved, which creates the first broad-based data protection instrument in India and deals with the privacy issues that are peculiar to AI applications (MeitY, 2023).

This paper focuses on the multidimensional nature of the digital transformation of India and how the technological infrastructure, policy frameworks, and socio-economic outcomes interact. The research answers vital questions on whether existing efforts have been effective in closing the digital divide, whether data governance systems are sufficient, and whether AI can be used to bring about inclusive growth in the diverse demographic environment in India.

Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity

The digital infrastructure in India has experienced phenomenal growth in the last ten years. The Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) has reported that there were 886 million active internet users in 2024, which is also an 8 percent yearly increase, and that the figure would surpass 900 million by 2025 (IAMAI & KANTAR, 2024). The nation has become the second-largest market in the world in terms of internet usage, where internet penetration stands at 55.3 percent of the total population as of January 2025 (Data Report, 2025).

Table 1

India's Digital Infrastructure Indicators (2024-2025)

| Indicator | Value |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Total Internet Users (January 2025) | 806 million |
| Internet Penetration Rate | 55.3% |
| Rural Internet Users | 488 million (55% of total) |
| Mobile Connections | 1.12 billion (76.6% of population) |
| Average Daily Online Time | 6 hours 49 minutes |
| Social Media Users | 491 million |

Source: Data Report (2025); IAMAI & KANTAR (2024)

Through the project of Bharat Net, more than 1.8 lakh Gram Panchayats are now connected to optical fibre that forms the basis of e-governance, e-health, and online education in rural settings (MeitY, 2025). Nevertheless, rural households with high-speed fibre connections are only 3.8 percent versus 15.3 percent in urban regions, which demonstrates the existence of infrastructural inequalities (Centre for Economic Data and Analysis [CEDA], 2025).

Digital Payments Ecosystem

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has transformed the financial industry of India and has become the leading digital payment platform. The role of UPI in the digital payments environment of India has increased twofold, previously making it 34% in 2019, and now 83% in 2024 (Reserve Bank of India [RBI], 2025). In 2024 alone, the amount of digital payment transactions in India was 208.5 billion, and more than 10 billion transactions were carried out via UPI, with the value amounting to 200 trillion in FY 2024 (RBI, 2025).



Table 2
UPI Growth Trajectory (FY 2018-2024)

| Financial Year | Volume (Billions) | Value (₹ Trillion) |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 2017-18 | 0.92 | 1.0 |
| 2020-21 | 22.3 | 41.0 |
| 2022-23 | 83.7 | 139.0 |
| 2023-24 | 131.1 | 200.0 |
| CAGR (2018-24) | 147% | 168% |

Source: Reserve Bank of India (2025); Vivekananda International Foundation (2024)

The Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity has made possible a new level of financial inclusion with 54.58 crore Jan Dhan accounts opened as of January 2025, with 55.7% of that total being women (MeitY, 2025). Even rural India has not been spared, as 555 million Indians are known to use digital payment methods on a regular basis (Meltwater, 2025).

India AI Mission and Artificial Intelligence

India AI Mission of March 2024, approved by the Cabinet, is the Indian strategy of utilizing the transformative power of AI in all sectors. The mission is designed with seven pillars, which include India AI Compute, India AI Innovation Centre, India AI Datasets Platform, India AI Application Development Initiative, India AI Future Skills, India AI Startup Financing, and Safe and Trusted AI (PIB, 2025). The mission entails an allocation of 10700 crore in five years, with 2000 crore specifically allocated to the Union Budget 2025-26.

India has performed exceptionally well in terms of capability building in AI. India is the highest in the AI skill penetration globally, with 2.8 on the Stanford AI Index 2024, outperforming the United States (2.2) and Germany (1.9) in the index. Since 2016, AI talent concentration in India has increased by 263 percent, making the country a major hub of AI (Stanford University, 2024). It has three AI Centres of Excellence currently opened in Healthcare, Agriculture, and Sustainable Cities, and a fourth one in education is announced with an outlay of ₹500 crore in Budget 2025 (PIB, 2025).

An example of AI use in inclusive growth is the BHASHINI platform that facilitates 35+ languages with more than 1,600 AI models and 18 language services, and it can be integrated into other platforms such as the IRCTC and NPCI systems (Principal Scientific Adviser, 2025). BharatGen is an initiative by the government of India, which was the first multimodal large language model funded by the government to improve the delivery of public services based on the foundational models in the areas of language, speech, and computer vision.

Data Governance Framework

The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDPA), which was passed on August 11, 2023, is currently the first universal data protection law adopted by India. The Act extends to digital personal information activities in India and extraterritorially in cases related to the provision of goods and services to people in the country (MeitY, 2023). The Act is operationalized by the Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025, which were notified on November 13, 2025, and provided rules on consent management, breach notification, redressing grievances, and impact assessment of the data protection (MeitY, 2025).



Table 3

Key Provisions of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023

| Component | Description |
|-----------------------|---|
| Data Fiduciary | An entity determining the purpose and means of processing personal data. |
| Data Principal Rights | Access, correction, erasure, grievance redressal, and nomination |
| Consent Requirements | Clear, specific, informed, unconditional with affirmative action |
| Penalties | Up to ₹250 crore for security failures; ₹200 crore for breach notifications |
| Data Protection Board | Autonomous body with investigatory and adjudicatory powers |

Source: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (2023)

Scientific Research and Innovation

The research and development environment in India has its ups and downs. Gross Expenditure on Research and Development (GERD) in the country doubled during the last ten years, and in 2020-21, the figure reached ₹1.27 lakh crore (Department of Science and Technology [DST], 2023). Nonetheless, the GERD as a share of GDP stood at 0.64% in 2020-21, which is much lower than the target of 2 percent and after China (2.4 percent), the United States (3.5 percent), and South Korea (4.8 percent) (DST, 2023).

Table 4

Comparative R&D Investment (% of GDP)

| Country | R&D Spending (% of GDP) |
|---------------|-------------------------|
| India | 0.64% |
| China | 2.43% |
| United States | 3.46% |
| South Korea | 4.93% |
| Israel | 5.56% |
| OECD Average | 2.70% |

Source: Department of Science and Technology (2023); OECD (2022)

The Act of Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) 2023 and the 1 lakh crore innovation fund in the Union budget 2024-25 are important guidelines in improving the research ecosystem in India. India is ranked number 39 on the Global Innovation Index 2024 and has a number of 40,813 PhDs every year, the third in the world, following the United States and China (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2024).

Overcoming the Digital Divide

Although there has been incredible development, India still experiences certain challenges when it comes to narrowing the digital gap. With urban households greater than 91.6 percent having internet access against 83.3 percent in rural areas, 16.7 percent of rural households remain unconnected, which is two times as many as urban households (CEDA, 2025). Digital readiness is the greatest obstacle, and almost half of the rural population is still offline due to their lack of awareness of the internet or their digital skills (National Sample Survey Office [NSSO], 2025).



The difference is further widened by gender disparities. Rural young women are only 56.9 percent owners of mobile phones relative to 81.2 percent of men, whereas the female internet access, though on the rising trend of 77.1 percent to 91.3 percent in rural-wilderness areas, does suggest vast disparities in digital agency (NSSO, 2025). The digital gender divide is fading; 47 percent of internet users are now women, the largest share since the beginning of history, although specialized actions are still required (IAMAI & KANTAR, 2024).

The problem of digital literacy is now urgent, with only 27 percent of people in rural areas being digitally literate and only 32.2 percent of the youth having made a digital presentation (NSSO, 2025). The Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan, meant to impart basic digital skills to 6 crore rural residents, fills this gap; however needs to be continued and extended.

Policy Recommendations and Conclusion

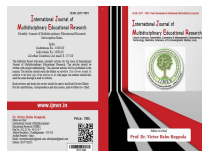
The digital transformation process of India has shown impressive success in developing digital public infrastructure, UPI transforming the nature of financial transactions, Aadhaar facilitating identity-based services to more than a billion people, and the platform of BHASHINI breaking barriers of different languages. India AI Mission and DPDPA are documents that define the principles of responsible AI building and data protection. Nonetheless, meaningful societal change, which would be highly inclusive, would involve mitigating the existing disparities and building core competencies.

The recommendations that include: universal connection through fibre provided by expanding BharatNet; targeted digital literacy programs, focusing on women and rural areas; investing in R&D leading to achieving the 2 per cent GDP of India goal through partnership with several corporations; enhancing institutional capability of the Data Protection Board; creating AI-indigenous models; creating specific mechanisms to manage AI ethically with commitment on the principles of responsible, safe, and trusty AI.

The road to the digitally empowered India will take multi-stakeholder cooperation, significant resource investments, and policies that will focus on inclusiveness. India can become a worldwide powerhouse of inclusive digital transformation by maximizing its demographic dividend, building out digital infrastructure, and enacting sound governance frameworks, whereby technological change can be extended to all 1.46 billion citizens (irrespective of geographic location, gender, or socio-economic status) in India.

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Cover Page



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CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA

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Abstract

By incorporating AI into e-governance technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) has the potential to completely transform India's administrative landscape by providing efficiency, accessibility, and inclusivity. This study looks at the different impacts, challenges, and opportunities that India's use of AI in e-governance has brought about. The study examines how advanced data analytics and predictive modeling can enhance decision-making, enhance service delivery, and speed up bureaucratic procedures in order to better understand how AI may improve e-governance in India. It also covers how chatbots and virtual assistants driven by AI might improve public participation and enable responsive governance. The study explores the difficulties in applying AI to e-governance, including issues with data security, privacy, and algorithmic decision-making bias. It also discusses the digital divide and the necessity of enhancing the government officials' capacity to use AI technologies efficiently.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, Electronic Governance, Digital India, Digital Era, AI integration, E-governance systems, Efficiency, Transparency.*

Introduction

As the world moves toward a digital economy, the application of AI in governance processes has garnered significant attention. Over time, Indian e-governance initiatives have evolved with the aim of effectively providing citizen-centered services. Artificial intelligence has completely transformed a number of global industries and has the potential to alter governance practices. The term "e-governance," or "electronic governance," describes the application of technology to improve the effectiveness, accessibility, and transparency of governmental procedures. The use of AI in e-governance is becoming more and more popular in India as the government works to digitally change public services. The present study endeavours to examine the present condition of artificial intelligence integration, pinpoint obstacles impeding its execution, and provide viable approaches for efficient adoption and application.

India, the world's second most populous country with over 1.3 billion people, has a wealth of diverse resources that require efficient management. E-governance is the use of electronic tools to facilitate information sharing between the public and the government, promote citizen participation, and provide public services. By establishing e-governance through electronic systems, corruption has decreased, and public service management has become more transparent and effective. AI is expected to revolutionize e-governance in India by introducing systems like chatbots to respond to repetitive



questions, voice-based recognition to identify regional dialects, and predictive analysis algorithms to evaluate data and make deductions.

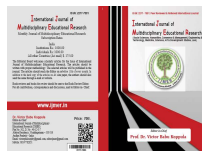
Increasing citizen accessibility and transparency to government services is the aim of "e-governance," the digital revolution in public administration. With an emphasis on increasing citizen satisfaction, e-governance enables the government to provide services more efficiently, economically, and securely. Artificial intelligence can be used in India's e-government to improve governance by automating routine tasks, identifying patterns and trends, and providing predictive analytics. The nation has worked hard to use technological methods to enhance public service delivery and governance. The country's level of corruption has decreased, and service delivery has greatly improved since e-governance was implemented. The management of administration in India is expected to undergo yet another transformation with the incorporation of artificial intelligence into e-governance technologies.

Rather than being merely a small technological development, the incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into the e-governance framework is a major change that has the potential to revolutionize public administration in India. Beyond automation, it's an opportunity to create more responsive, intelligent governance systems that solve long-standing inefficiencies and create new opportunities for public participation, administrative excellence, and service delivery. With its ambitious Digital India plan, India is setting the standard for using technological innovation to transform public administration. AI and e-governance together have the potential to completely change how governments operate, engage with the public, distribute resources, and improve governance.

The confluence of artificial intelligence and e-governance bears substantial consequences for the public administration of India. It signifies a noteworthy advancement in the integration of technology and a move towards transparent, data-driven, and responsive governance. We explore the intricacies, opportunities, and challenges associated with this change as we examine AI's role in electronic governance in India, providing insight into the way forward for an even more effective and citizen-centric governance paradigm. Instead of being a minor technological improvement, the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) technologies into the e-governance framework is a significant shift that has the potential to completely transform public administration in India. Apart from automation, it offers a chance to create more intelligent and responsive governance systems that address enduring inefficiencies and open up new opportunities for service delivery, public engagement, and administrative excellence. India is at the forefront of employing technological innovation to transform public administration via its ambitious Digital India initiative. Artificial intelligence and e-governance possess the capacity to fundamentally transform governmental operations, public engagement, resource allocation, and the enhancement of governance. E-governance denotes the utilization of information and communication technology (ICT) to efficiently provide government services. It is essential for enhancing transparency, mitigating corruption, and empowering citizens. India's advancement in digital public infrastructure, exemplified by initiatives such as Aadhaar, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and DigiLocker, has established the nation as a global frontrunner in digital transformation. The digital divide, intensified by socio-economic inequalities and infrastructural deficiencies, limits the advantages of e-governance from being accessible to all segments of society.

Opportunities across the Governance Lifecycle

The potential applications of AIs permeate the entire corporate governance framework. In IPO readiness, AI can prevent offer documents by checking for missing disclosures, conflicting glossary terms, or inconsistent KPIs across disclosures, undisclosed litigations, etc. In secretarial audit and



Cover Page



continuous monitoring, AI can automate the mapping of the Companies Act, 2013, and SEBI LODR requirements to entity calendars, detect exceptions in registers, and apply anomaly detection to related party transactions. For boards, AI can summarize voluminous board packs, present scenario analysis on ESG controversies, or generate comparative briefs on policy options. In shareholder engagement, AI-assisted tools can help draft AGM notices, FAQs, and investor updates—always subject to human legal review. Even in CSR and social audit, AI can capture evidence, synthesize impact narratives, and flag project delays or policy mismatches through dashboards. At the same time, it must be emphasized that AI should serve as an assistive layer and not a standalone solution. Any legal or regulatory documentation prepared or reviewed with AI assistance must be thoroughly vetted by qualified professionals, such as Company Secretaries. A misinterpretation of statutory language, an incorrect citation, or a missed disclosure—even if minor—can expose companies to significant penalties, compliance failures, or reputational harm. Hence, the safe and responsible integration of AI requires a clear “human-in-the-loop” safeguard, where final accountability rests firmly with the professional reviewer.

Better decisions: Artificial Intelligence has the capacity to examine enormous volumes of data, spot trends, and offer insights for evidence-based decisions. Policy decisions can be guided by predictive analytics by using it to predict future issues.

Reimagined Service Delivery: Chatbots and virtual assistants driven by AI may respond to questions from citizens, expedite procedures, and increase service effectiveness. Personalized services improve user experience; examples include customized reminders or recommendations.

Robotic Process Automation (RPA): The use of RPA will expand in government operations, automating routine tasks, document processing, and data entry, allowing human employees to focus on more complex tasks.

Enhanced Accountability and Transparency: AI can monitor and audit public sector operations, promoting accountability and reducing corruption. Blockchain technology, which is frequently linked to AI, can improve data accountability and integrity.

Inclusivity and Accessibility: AI can overcome linguistic barriers, enabling a wide range of people to use services. The e-governance systems can be accessed by citizens with impairments through voice interfaces and visual recognition.

Impact of Artificial Intelligence in E-governance

AI analyzes data from several sources to support data-driven decision-making in the areas of infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other areas. Real-time information enhances disaster response and crisis management.

Better Service Delivery: Artificial Intelligence (AI) can automate repetitive operations and optimize administrative processes, resulting in faster and more effective service delivery in e-governance. Artificial intelligence (AI)-powered chatbots and virtual assistants can instantly respond to questions from the public, cutting down on wait times and raising satisfaction levels. Personalized services catered to the requirements and interests of each individual citizen are made possible by artificial intelligence (AI). A more user-centric approach can be achieved by e-governance platforms by using



AI algorithms to tailor information and recommendations based on user behaviour, demographics, and previous interactions.

Increased Accessibility: People with impairments or those who are experiencing linguistic barriers can benefit from AI-driven solutions. Speech recognition and language translation are made possible by natural language processing (NLP) technologies, which improve the effectiveness of interactions between various populations and e-governance systems.

Predictive governance: AI makes it possible to forecast and model ahead, giving governments the ability to foresee problems and take proactive measures to solve them. AI-driven predictive analytics can help with proactive policy interventions and resource allocation, from predicting traffic congestion to forecasting disease outbreaks.

Cost Savings and Efficiency: Artificial intelligence (AI) can assist governments in cutting operational costs and raising overall e-governance efficiency by automating repetitive processes and optimizing resource allocation. Artificial intelligence (AI) technologies have the potential to save costs in a number of areas, including document processing automation and smart city energy usage optimization.

Challenges for Artificial Intelligence in E-governance

Data Security and Privacy: In order to train and make decisions, AI systems need to have access to vast volumes of data. One of the biggest challenges is making sure that sensitive citizen information is secure and private. It's crucial to guard against misuse, illegal access, and data breaches involving personal information.

Ethical Concerns: AI systems may unintentionally reinforce prejudices seen in previous data. It is essential to guarantee equity and openness in AI decision-making. It is difficult to address ethical issues with AI, such as responsibility, bias, and unforeseen repercussions.

Lack of Trust: People in the public and in government positions could be dubious of decisions made by AI. Clarity of communication, explainability, and transparency are essential for fostering trust in AI systems. For adoption to be effective, the idea that AI is a "black box" must be dispelled.

Internet Access and the Digital Divide: Having access to the internet is essential for e-governance. AI-driven services are difficult to implement in places with restricted access. Important objectives include guaranteeing fair access to AI-powered services and bridging the digital divide. Building professional skills and capacity is crucial. Government employees and officials need to be trained in the principles, applications, and management of artificial intelligence. It is difficult to develop a workforce with the necessary skills to operate AI systems.

Environmental Impact: Data centres, computational resources, and AI infrastructure all have an impact on the environment. Technical developments and sustainability must be balanced. It's difficult to reduce AI systems' carbon footprint.



Integration with Current platforms: It can be challenging to smoothly integrate AI into current e-governance platforms. AI technology might not work with legacy systems. It's difficult to guarantee interoperability and seamless transitions.

Legal and Regulatory Frameworks: It is difficult to create laws and rules that are suitable for AI in e-governance. Innovation and safety must be balanced. It is crucial to address responsibility, liability, and intellectual property rights in relation to AI systems.

Cost and Scalability: It can be costly to scale AI technologies to meet the needs of a large population. Cost-effectiveness and budgetary restrictions are obstacles. It's critical to weigh the advantages of AI against its accompanying expenses.

Evolution of Artificial Intelligence: Governments need to adjust as AI advances. It's difficult to stay on top of technological developments and realize AI's full potential. Investigating how AI may be used for automation, customized services, and data-driven decision making is a promising direction. E-governance raises ethical concerns. The proper application of AI in decision-making, the possibility of employment displacement from automation, and the moral ramifications of assigning some duties to machines are only a few of the ethical concerns raised by AI systems. When implementing AI in e-governance, it is imperative to strike a balance between ethical considerations and technological breakthroughs.

Bridging the Skill Gap and Developing Capacity: Using AI in e-governance calls for a workforce with specific knowledge of data science, machine learning, and artificial intelligence development. It may be difficult for governments to find and keep talent, as well as to teach and develop the skills of current employees so they can use AI technologies.

Accountability and Transparency: AI systems, especially those that use deep learning techniques, are sometimes viewed as "black boxes," making it challenging to comprehend how they make decisions. Citizens have a right to know how decisions that impact them are made in e-governance. Building legitimacy and trust in AI systems requires ensuring accountability and transparency.

Conclusion

Incorporating artificial intelligence (AI) into e-governance offers enormous potential to transform administrative processes, enhance citizen services, and advance transparency in India. Through our research, we have demonstrated how AI can have a substantial impact on e-governance systems as well as the challenges that must be addressed to fully realize its advantages. Machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics are examples of AI technologies that present chances to automate repetitive operations, enhance decision-making, and provide citizens with individualized services. But the effective application of AI in e-governance necessitates giving considerable thought to the ethical, legal, and social ramifications of the decision as well as to the cybersecurity, digital divide, and data privacy concerns. Furthermore, although AI might enhance service delivery and expedite government processes, it also presents issues, including algorithmic bias, a lack of accountability, and the possibility of job displacement. Consequently, in order to effectively control AI, authorities must take a comprehensive approach that includes strong legislative frameworks, multi-stakeholder collaboration, and capacity building. Artificial Intelligence (AI) integration with e-governance presents significant opportunities for improving citizen services, changing administrative



Cover Page

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procedures, and promoting transparency in India. Our study shows how e-governance systems could be significantly impacted by AI and highlights the issues that need to be resolved in order to fully reap its benefits. AI technologies that provide opportunities to automate repetitive tasks, enhance decision-making, and provide individuals with personalized services include machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics. The successful implementation of AI in e-governance requires careful consideration of the ethical, legal, and societal implications, along with concerns around cybersecurity, the digital divide, and data privacy. Moreover, while AI may improve service delivery and accelerate governmental procedures, it also raises concerns such as algorithmic bias, insufficient accountability, and the potential for job displacement. Therefore, to properly regulate AI, authorities must adopt a holistic strategy that encompasses robust legislative frameworks, collaborative engagement among multiple stakeholders, and capacity enhancement. In summary, India faces obstacles in integrating AI into e-governance; nevertheless, through resolute efforts and strategic investments, the nation can emerge as a global leader in utilizing advanced technology for the public benefit. To effectively address the problems and harness the transformative potential of AI in reforming Indian governance, collaboration among officials, technologists, and civil society is essential.

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SKILL ENHANCEMENT PROGRAMMES IN INDIA – ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

The Skill India Mission, launched in 2015, aims to enhance vocational skills, productivity, and employability to meet the demands of India's growing economy. This study examines the implementation of key skill India Programmes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY), Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) – With a focus on training quality, institutional coordination, and placement outcomes. Using policy analysis and field-based observations from selected training centres, the research evaluates the extent to which programme guidelines are translated into effective practices. Findings highlight notable progress in expanding training infrastructure, industry partnerships, and certification standards. However, Challenges remain, including uneven regional coverage, limited awareness among target groups, skill–industry mismatch, and inconsistent placement tracking. Strengthening the monitoring mechanism, ensuring an industry-aligned curriculum, and enhancing support for marginalized groups are essential to improving impact. The paper concludes that effective implementation of Skill India Programmes is crucial for developing a future-ready workforce and promoting inclusive socio–economic development.

Key Words: *Skill India, employability, monitoring mechanism, socio–economic development skill–industry.*

1. Introduction

India is home to one of the world's largest pools of youth, with over 62 percent of the population falling within the working-age group. Such a demographic structure presents an unparalleled opportunity to accelerate economic progress, provided that the workforce is adequately trained and empowered to participate in productive sectors. In this context, the Government of India has prioritized skill development as a central pillar of national development. Skill enhancement programmes are designed to equip individuals with job-specific competencies, reduce structural unemployment, enhance productivity, and bridge the persistent mismatch between labour supply and industry demand. While the country has witnessed a significant expansion of skill initiatives over the past decade, the actual transition of trained individuals into sustainable employment remains limited. The majority of industries continue to report shortages of skilled labour, while millions of graduates struggle to meet the skill standards required for modern workplaces.

This research paper aims to explore the evolution, achievements, and shortcomings of India's skill development ecosystem. It also analyses the disjunction between policy aspirations and on-ground realities, while offering practical policy recommendations for strengthening the nation's capacity to produce a future-ready workforce.



Historical Evolution of Skill Development in India

India's engagement with vocational training can be traced back to the early post-independence period. The Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs), established in the 1950s under the Ministry of Labour, marked the first nationwide effort to impart structured technical training. However, for several decades, vocational education was perceived as inferior to academic degrees and was associated largely with manual or blue-collar occupations.

2.1 Pre-Liberalization Phase (1950 - 1990)

Before the economic reforms of 1991, vocational training largely served the manufacturing and industrial sectors. The number of ITIs expanded gradually, but the curriculum remained focused on traditional mechanical trades such as welding, masonry, electrical work, and carpentry. Limited private sector participation and outdated training infrastructure constrained the system's ability to adapt to emerging labour market needs.

2.2 Post-Liberalization Reforms (1991 onwards)

The economic liberalization of 1991 dramatically reshaped India's labour landscape. The rapid growth of information technology, services, retail, hospitality, and electronics created an urgent demand for skilled workers. This triggered several reforms:

- Introduction of Modular Employable Skills (MES)
- Expansion of private vocational training institutes
- Increased policy attention to skill standardization
- Creation of partnerships between industry and training institutions

A major turning point came with the establishment of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in 2008, which initiated a public-private partnership model for large-scale skilling. The launch of the Skill India Mission in 2015 further consolidated national efforts to create an integrated skill ecosystem.

3. Major Skill Enhancement Initiatives in India

India's skill development landscape today consists of a diverse array of schemes, training structures, and institutional frameworks. This section provides a detailed overview of the principal programmes shaping skill development in the country.

3.1. Skill India Mission (2015)

The **Skill India Mission**, launched on **15 July 2015**, is one of the Government of India's most ambitious initiatives aimed at transforming India into a highly skilled, industry-ready, and productive workforce hub. Recognizing that India possesses one of the world's youngest populations, the mission seeks to utilize this demographic advantage by equipping youth with employable skills, fostering entrepreneurship, and bridging gaps between education and practical work requirements. It functions as an **umbrella mission**, integrating multiple schemes, institutions, and programs that together build a unified ecosystem of skill development.



The mission focuses on **industry-relevant skills**, covering technical, vocational, soft, and digital skills. It aims to reduce the **skill gap** between workforce abilities and industry demand. Through PMKVY, youth receive **free short-term training** and certification aligned with national standards (NSQF). NAPS promotes **apprenticeships**, enabling hands-on industry experience. Sector Skill Councils help design curricula and conduct assessments for various industries. The mission emphasizes the inclusion of **women, rural youth, and unorganized sector workers**.

3.2 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)

A flagship programme offering free, short-term skill training and recognition of prior learning. The objectives of PMKVY are to enhance the provision of industry-relevant, skill-based training, enhance the certification of prior skills through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), enhance the employability of youth, enhance industry participation, and enhance the promotion of entrepreneurship.

PMKVY is implemented through the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), the Sector Skill Councils (SSCs), and various Training Partners along with their Training Centres. The scheme has achieved several milestones, including the enrollment of millions of candidates across various sectors, increased nationwide visibility of skill training, the introduction of standardized training modules, formal recognition of informal skills through the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), and greater participation from private sector training institutes.

PMKVY has trained millions across diverse sectors such as healthcare, construction, logistics, retail, and electronics. Its achievements include greater awareness of vocational training and increased private sector participation. However, concerns over placement rates and quality variability persist.

3.3 Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushal Yojana (DDU-GKY)

DDU-GKY was introduced with a special focus on rural youth between 15 and 35 years of age. Its distinguishing features include:

- Mandatory placement-linked training
- Long-duration courses for sustainable employment
- Social inclusion measures targeting SC, ST, minority groups, and women
- Multi-partner delivery through industry and NGOs
- By connecting rural youth to modern sectors, DDU-GKY aims to enable long-term upward mobility and reduce poverty.

3.4 National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)

NAPS was established in 2016 to strengthen India's apprenticeship ecosystem, which historically lagged behind global standards. The scheme offers:

- Financial incentives to employers for engaging apprentices
- Support for basic training costs
- Structured, hands-on learning opportunities



Apprenticeships are crucial for bridging the gap between theoretical learning and workplace requirements, yet India's participation levels remain relatively low compared to developed economies.

3.5 Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS)

JSS provides community-based vocational training aimed at illiterate, neo-literate, and school-dropout populations, particularly women. It promotes:

- Low-cost, locally relevant skills
- Self-employment and micro-enterprise development
- Lifelong learning in backward and marginalized regions

The programme plays an important role in extending skill development to social groups often excluded from formal training.

3.6 Skill Education under the National Education Policy (2020)

The NEP-2020 represents a paradigm shift by integrating vocational and academic education. Key provisions include:

- Introduction of vocational exposure from Class 6
- Mandatory internships for school and college students
- Credit-based modular courses
- Greater collaboration between schools, industry, and higher education institutions

These reforms aim to reduce the long-standing divide between formal education and employability.

4. Issues and Challenges in India's Skill Development Ecosystem

Despite extensive government investments and innovative reforms, India's skill development programmes continue to face systemic challenges.

4.1 Mismatch between Skills Offered and Industry Demand

One of the most persistent problems is that many vocational courses and skill-training programmes remain disconnected from actual industry requirements. The content tends to be outdated, focused on traditional trades, while the demand in the economy increasingly shifts toward newer sectors - including technology, services, green jobs, and emerging industries.

As a result, many trained individuals remain under-employed or not employable in relevant jobs; the skill gap persists despite large-scale training efforts. Further, the growth of gig-economy, platform-based work, and non-traditional employment models demands a different skill set (digital literacy, soft skills, flexibility) - which are largely unaddressed by conventional vocational training frameworks.

4.2 Quality Concerns: Infrastructure, Trainers, and Training Delivery

Many training institutes, particularly in rural or underdeveloped regions, suffer from poor infrastructure, inadequate facilities, and a lack of modern equipment, compromising the quality of practical training. There is also a shortage of qualified trainers, instructors, and assessors capable of providing industry-relevant guidance and ensuring that training outcomes meet real standards.

- The absence of a standardized, unified curriculum and certification across training institutes - especially earlier, when multiple ministries and agencies ran overlapping schemes - has led to fragmentation and confusion



- The lack of strong quality assurance mechanisms and standardized benchmarks means completion of a course does not always guarantee competence at par with industry expectations.

4.3 Inconsistent Training Quality

Because training providers vary widely in capability, quality remains uneven across states and sectors. Some institutions inflate enrolments, compromise on practical training hours, or provide minimal placement support, undermining public confidence in the system.

4.4 Weak Industry Linkages

Industry participation is essential for curriculum design, internships, and apprenticeships. However, many enterprises—especially MSMEs—are reluctant to collaborate due to regulatory complexities, cost constraints, and limited awareness. This results in limited on-the-job training opportunities.

4.5 Ineffective Certification and Low Market Value

Short-term courses often fail to create deep competencies, leading employers to prefer experienced workers or degree holders. Certification frameworks also lack strong national branding, reducing their acceptance in labour markets.

4.6 Fragmented Governance Structure

Up to 20 central ministries operate parallel skill development initiatives. Coordination gaps lead to duplication of resources, inconsistent standards, and overlapping responsibilities.

4.7 Social Barriers and Stigma

Vocational education still carries a perception of being a “second-class” option compared to general university degrees. Many students enroll reluctantly, causing low motivation and high dropout rates.

4.8 Limited Reach among Vulnerable Groups

Rural, tribal, and marginalized communities face additional barriers such as limited transport, linguistic differences, safety concerns, and cultural constraints—particularly for women.

4.9 Inadequate Monitoring and Outcome Tracking

Assessment and evaluation mechanisms often fail to accurately record training outcomes. Placement data in many schemes remains unreliable, and post-training support is limited.

4.10 Absence of Lifelong Learning Opportunities

Most programmes are short-term, with no clear vertical pathways for progression to higher levels of vocational education or continuous upskilling.



5. Broader Consequences of These Challenges

The weaknesses of India's skill development programmes have implications far beyond the labour market.

Economic Loss and Inefficiency: When training fails to meet industry requirements, it results in wasted public expenditure and productivity losses.

Unemployment and Underemployment: A large proportion of degree holders lack employable skills, contributing to structural unemployment.

Widening Inequalities: Uneven access to skilling deepens regional and socio-economic disparities.

Erosion of Trust: Poor outcomes reinforce social stigma around vocational education.

Mismatch with Future Workforce Needs: Inadequate skilling threatens India's ability to compete in emerging sectors such as clean energy, digital technologies, and advanced manufacturing.

6. Insights from Recent Literature

Recent academic research highlights several critical issues:

- Studies conducted in 2024–2025 indicate that a substantial share of India's workforce continues to lack formal vocational training, despite major government initiatives.
- Scholars argue that the skill development system remains insufficiently aligned with the "Make in India" vision and global industry demands.
- Research also points to the need for future-oriented skill programmes that prioritize digital competencies, green jobs, and technological adaptability.
- Policy analyses emphasize systemic shortcomings such as weak oversight, fragmented governance, and an excessive focus on training numbers rather than outcomes.

7. Recommendations for Strengthening Skill Development in India

7.1 Enhance Industry Alignment

- Establish mandatory industry consultations to update curricula annually.
- Expand sector-specific "Skill Labs" for hands-on learning.
- Strengthen apprenticeship requirements for medium and large firms.

7.2 Improve Infrastructure and Training Quality

- Modernize ITIs and training centres with digital tools and simulation systems.
- Implement strict accreditation and periodic audits.
- Expand Training of Trainers (ToT) programmes linked to industry exposure.



7.3 Mainstream Vocational Training through Education: Integrate vocational modules from middle school through higher education. Encourage internships and dual-training models in universities. Promote credit-linked, flexible vocational courses.

7.4 Increase Inclusivity and Gender Sensitivity: Establish training facilities in remote areas. Provide hostels, transport allowances, and childcare support. Encourage women's participation in high-growth, non-traditional sectors.

7.5 Strengthen Monitoring and Transparency: Use digital attendance, biometric verification, and AI-based audits. Track trainees for at least two years after completion. Penalize non-compliant training providers.

7.6 Improve Placement and Entrepreneurship Support: Create district-level employment facilitation centres. Train youth in financial literacy, digital marketing, and enterprise management. Link skilling with government credit schemes for start-ups and micro-enterprises.

7.7 Develop a Lifelong Learning Framework: Establish clear pathways from certificate to diploma to degree levels. Promote online and blended learning models. Encourage continuous re-skilling and up-skilling to ensure long-term employability.

8. Conclusion

Skill enhancement is a cornerstone of India's development trajectory, affecting economic competitiveness, employment generation, and social equity. Although programmes such as PMKVY, DDU-GKY, NAPS, and JSS have expanded access to training, persistent gaps remain in quality, governance, industry relevance, and inclusivity. The challenge for India is not merely to train more people but to train them effectively, with a clear focus on employability, economic relevance, and long-term career development.

Skill enhancement programmes in India hold enormous promise - potentially translating India's demographic dividend into economic growth, social mobility, and inclusive development. Over the decades, multiple initiatives have sought to build a skilled workforce through vocational training, certification, and targeted schemes. However, the persistent issues - skill-market mismatches, poor quality of training, limited outreach, inadequate industry linkage, social stigma, and institutional fragmentation - have constrained the full realization of these aims. For India to truly harness its human capital, a paradigm shift is needed: from quantity to quality; from supply-driven training to demand-driven, industry-aligned skilling; from urban-centric to inclusive outreach; from short-term courses to continuous learning and up-skilling. Only then can skill enhancement programmes become effective tools of socio-economic transformation.

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DYNAMICS OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN INDIA- A PERSPECTIVE OF POLICY IMPLICATION

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Abstract:

A Coalition government is a form of government where two or more political parties share power and work together to govern a country. This typically happens when no single party wins an absolute majority in an election, so they ally to achieve a majority and form the government. This has become a common feature of all Indian Political parties from the 1990s onwards. Due to inadequate organizational Structures and narrow levels of influence in certain regions, All Parties rely on electoral understandings, seat adjustments, and Power sharing with many other parties. As the operational base of these parties is confined to only some Pockets in each state, this type of political alliance is felt necessary. Many smaller parties have Political alliances with major parties. For example. BJP's alliance with TDP and Janasena in Andhra Pradesh, likewise, Congress Party's alliance with DMK in Tamil Nadu, RJD in Bihar, JMM in Jharkhand, and so on. These Pre-Poll alliances transform themselves into post-poll political Coalitions to establish governments at the centre and States. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and United Progressive Alliance (UPA) reflect the trend of coalition Politics.

Keywords: *Coalition government, Inadequate, electoral understandings, seat adjustments, power sharing, operational base, Political Alliance, National Parties, Regional parties, Sub-Regional Parties, multi-party system, pre-poll Alliance, National Democratic Alliance, United Progressive Alliance.*

Introduction:

A Coalition government is a form of government where two or more Political Parties share Power and work together to govern a Country. This typically happens when no single party absolute majority in an election, so they form the government. Due to inadequate organizational structures and narrow levels of influence in certain regions, all parties rely on electoral understandings, Seat Adjustments, and Power sharing with many other parties. This type of political alliance is felt to be necessary. Many smaller parties have political alliances with Major parties. For example, Bharatiya Janata Party's alliance with Telugu Desam Party and Janasena. Party in Andhra Pradesh, Likewise, the Indian National Congress alliance with Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam in Tamil Nadu, Rashtriya Janata Bal in Bihar, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in Jharkhand, and so on. These Pre-Poll Alliances transform themselves into Post-Poll Political coalitions to establish governments at the centre and states. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) reflect the trend of coalition Politics.



1977 SIXTH LOKSABHA ELECTIONS

| S.NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Janatha Party | 295 |
| 2 | C.P. I | 07 |
| 3 | C.P.M | 22 |
| 4 | Congress | 154 |
| 5 | D.M. K | 01 |
| 6 | A.I.A.D.M. K | 18 |
| 7 | Akalidal | 08 |
| 8 | Independents | 09 |
| 9 | Others | 28 |
| | Total | 542 |

FIRST Coalition Government:

From 1977 onwards, the Indian Political System witnessed the emergence of various political parties at the national level, regional level, and sub-regional level. These parties have challenged the domination of the Congress Party both at the Central level and the State level. The 1977 Janata Party experiment witnessed the merger of all political parties, like Bharatiya Jana Sangh, Socialists, Bharatiya Kranti Dal, Congress for Democracy (CFD), and so on, and rendered a formidable challenge to the Congress Party. Further, this experiment proved to be futile with splits and internal bickering. As a result, the Congress Party bounced back to power in 1980.

1989 NINTH LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

| S.NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | B.J. P | 85 |
| 2 | C.P. I | 12 |
| 3 | C.P.M | 33 |
| 4 | Congress | 197 |
| 5 | Janatadal | 143 |
| 6 | A.D. K | 11 |
| 7 | D.M. K | 0 |
| 8 | R.S. P | 04 |
| 9 | Telugu Desam | 02 |
| 10 | B.S. P | 03 |
| 11 | J.M.M | 03 |
| 12 | M.I.M | 01 |
| 13 | Shivasena | 01 |
| 14 | A.I.A.D.M. K | 11 |
| 15 | Independents | 12 |
| 16 | Others | 25 |
| | Total | 543 |



SECOND Coalition Government (National Front):

Formation of National Front Government:

The National Front government, led by V.P. Singh, lasted from December 2, 1989, to November 10, 1990, a duration of approximately 343 days. The BJP withdrew its support due to the government's handling of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, leading to the government's collapse. V.P. Singh lost a confidence vote in Parliament, leading to his resignation. A faction led by Chandra Shekhar split from the Janata Dal, further weakening the government. The National Front government's downfall marked a significant shift in Indian politics, highlighting the challenges of coalition politics and the importance of maintaining alliances.

1996 TENTH LOKSABHA ELECTIONS:

| S.NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | B.J. P | 161 |
| 2 | C.P. I | 12 |
| 3 | C.P.M | 32 |
| 4 | Congress | 140 |
| 5 | Janatadal | 46 |
| 6 | S.A. P | 08 |
| 7 | D.M. K | 17 |
| 8 | S. P | 17 |
| 9 | TeluguDesam | 16 |
| 10 | B.S. P | 11 |
| 11 | Shivasena | 15 |
| 12 | Independents | 09 |
| 13 | Others | 59 |
| | Total | 543 |

THIRD Coalition Government (United Front):

The United Front government in India was formed in 1996, following the general elections, as a coalition of 13 political parties. The government was led by two Prime Ministers from the Janata Dal- H.D.Deve Gowda and I.K.Gujral. N.Chandrababu Naidu of the Telugu Desam Party served as the convener of the United Front. The United Front government lasted from June 1, 1996, to April 21, 1997, under H. D. Deve Gowda, and then from April 21, 1997, to March 19, 1998, under I.K. Gujral. The government's downfall was triggered by the Congress party's withdrawal of support, amidst discontent over communication between the coalition and the Congress. Fresh elections were called, and the United Front lost power in 1998.

Policies and programs of the United Front government:

The United Front government, led by H.D.Deve Gowda and I.K.Gujral, implemented several key policies and programs during its tenure (1996-1998). Some notable initiatives include:



Economic Policies

Continued economic liberalization and reforms initiated by previous governments. Focused on improving infrastructure, including roads, ports, and telecommunications.

Social Policies

Increased focus on agricultural development and farmers' welfare. Emphasized improving education and healthcare services.

Foreign Policy

Emphasized non-reciprocal relations with neighboring countries, promoting regional cooperation. Strengthened ties with Southeast Asian nations.

Other Initiations

Introduced a bill to reserve seats for women in Parliament and state legislatures. Strengthened local governance through Panchayat Raj institutions. The United Front government's policies aimed to promote economic growth, social justice, and regional cooperation.

1998 TWELFTH LOKSABHA ELECTIONS:

| S.NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | B.J. P | 182 |
| 2 | C.P. I | 09 |
| 3 | C.P.M | 32 |
| 4 | Congress | 141 |
| 5 | Janatadal | 06 |
| 6 | S.A. P | 12 |
| 7 | D.M. K | 06 |
| 8 | P.M. K | 04 |
| 9 | TeluguDesam | 12 |
| 10 | S. P | 20 |
| 11 | J.M.M | 03 |
| 12 | R.P. I | 04 |
| 13 | R.J. D | 17 |
| 14 | A.I.A.D.M. K | 18 |
| 15 | Others | 75 |
| | Total | 543 |

FOURTH Coalition Government (National Democratic Alliance):

The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government was formed in May 1998 as a coalition of center-right and regional parties, led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The alliance was formed to contest the general elections and unite anti-Congress parties.



Duration

The NDA government has had multiple terms: First term (1998-1999): Led by Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the government collapsed within a year due to AIADMK's withdrawal of support. Second term (1999-2004): Vajpayee led the government again, serving a full five-year term. Third term (2014-2019): Led by Narendra Modi, the government implemented various economic and social reforms. Fourth term(2019-present): Modi led the government again, focusing on infrastructure development and welfare schemes.

Downfall

The NDA government faced challenges, including AIADMK's withdrawal (1999), which led to the government's collapse. Defeating the 2004 elections: The NDA lost to the United Progressive Alliance (UPA). Internal conflicts: Disagreements among alliance partners, such as ShivSena's exit in 2019.

Policies and Programs

Some notable initiatives include:

Economic reforms: Liberalization, infrastructure development, and digitalization.

Social welfare schemes: Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, and Swachh Bharat Mission.

Foreign Policy: Gujral Doctrine, Look East Policy, and strengthened ties with Southeast Asia. National security: Kargil war victory, counter-terrorism efforts, and border management. The NDA government's policies and programs have aimed to promote economic growth, social justice, and national security.

1999THIRTEENTHLOKSABHA ELECTIONS:

| S. NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|-------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | B.J. P | 182 |
| 2 | B.S. P | 14 |
| 3 | C.P. I | 04 |
| 4 | C.P.M | 33 |
| 5 | Congress | 114 |
| 6 | J.D(S) | 01 |
| 7 | J.D(U) | 21 |
| 8 | Telugu Desam | 29 |
| 9 | P.M. K | 05 |
| 10 | D.M. K | 12 |
| 11 | B.J. D | 10 |
| 12 | A.I.A.D.M. K | 10 |
| 13 | A.I.T.C | 08 |
| 14 | M.C. P | 08 |
| 15 | R.J. D | 07 |
| 16 | Shivasena | 15 |
| 17 | S.P | 26 |
| 18 | Independents | 06 |
| 19 | Others | 40 |
| | Total | 543 |



FIFTH Coalition Government (United Progressive Alliance):

Formation

The United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government was formed in 2004 as a coalition of center-left and regional parties, led by the Indian National Congress. The alliance was formed to contest the general elections and unite anti-BJP parties.

Duration

The UPA government had two terms: First term (2004-2009): Led by Manmohan Singh, the government implemented various economic and social reforms.

Policies and Programs

Some notable initiatives include:

Economic reforms: Continued liberalization, infrastructure development, and rural employment guarantee (NREGA). Social welfare schemes: Right to Information (RTI), Right to Education (RTE), and Food Security Act. Infrastructure development: Expansion of highways, ports, and airports. Foreign policy: India-US nuclear deal, strengthened ties with neighboring countries. The UPA government's policies aimed to promote inclusive growth, social justice, and economic development.

2004 FOURTEENTH LOKSABHA ELECTIONS:

| S.NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | B.J. P | 138 |
| 2 | B.S. P | 19 |
| 3 | C.P. I | 10 |
| 4 | C.P.M | 43 |
| 5 | Congress | 145 |
| 6 | N.C. P | 09 |
| 7 | A.G. P | 02 |
| 8 | J.D.(U) | 08 |
| 9 | J.D.(S) | 03 |
| 10 | D.M. K | 16 |
| 11 | J.M.M | 05 |
| 12 | A.I.A.D.M. K | 04 |
| 13 | P.M. K | 06 |
| 14 | M.C. P | 08 |
| 15 | R.J D | 24 |
| 16 | Shivasena | 12 |
| 17 | S. P | 33 |
| 18 | Independents | 05 |
| 19 | S.A. D | 08 |
| 20 | Telugu desam | 05 |
| 21 | C.J.N.S. P | 04 |
| 22 | T.R. S | 05 |
| 23 | A.I.M.I.M | 01 |
| 24 | Others | 24 |
| | Total | 543 |



2009 FIFTEENTH LOKSABHA ELECTIONS:

| S.NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | Congress | 206 |
| 2 | B.J. P | 116 |
| 3 | B.S.P | 21 |
| 4 | C.P.M | 16 |
| 5 | S. P | 23 |
| 6 | A.I.T.C | 19 |
| 7 | Telugudesam | 06 |
| 8 | N.C. P | 09 |
| 9 | D.M. K | 18 |
| 10 | B.J. D | 14 |
| 11 | J.D(U) | 20 |
| 12 | A.I.A.D.M. K | 09 |
| 13 | C.P. I | 04 |
| 14 | J.D(S) | 03 |
| 15 | R.J. D | 04 |
| 16 | Shivasena | 11 |
| 17 | T.R. S | 02 |
| 18 | R.L. D | 05 |
| 19 | J.M.M | 02 |
| 20 | Telugudesam | 05 |
| 21 | A.I.M.I.M | 01 |
| 22 | Others | 29 |
| | Total | 543 |

SIXTH Coalition Government (United Progressive Alliance):

In the 15th Lok Sabha elections, which were held in April–May 2009. The United Progressive Alliance (UPA), led by the Indian National Congress (INC), won a clear majority with 262 seats, which was much stronger than in 2004. Dr. Manmohan Singh continued as Prime Minister for a second consecutive term. Major supporting parties: Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), Trinamool Congress (TMC), and National Conference (NC).

Major Policies and Programmes (2009–2014):

1. **Economic Policies:** During this period, the government continued its focus on economic reforms and liberalization. It introduced the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme in 2013 to send subsidies directly to beneficiaries through bank accounts. The National Manufacturing Policy was launched in 2011 to promote industrial growth and create more employment opportunities. Additionally, the government managed the recovery from the 2008 Global Financial Crisis by increasing public spending and stimulating overall demand in the economy.



2. **Social Welfare Programmes:** In the area of social welfare, several landmark initiatives were undertaken. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was expanded to ensure 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in rural areas. The Right to Education (RTE) Act, enacted in 2009, made free and compulsory education a fundamental right for children between 6 and 14 years of age. The National Food Security Act of 2013 aimed to provide subsidized food grains to nearly two-thirds of the population. The Aadhaar (UIDAI) project was launched in 2009 to provide a unique identification number to all residents, enabling better delivery of government services.

3. **Health and Women Empowerment:** The National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) was strengthened to improve healthcare facilities in rural areas. The Janani Shishu Suraksha Karyakram (JSSK) was introduced to provide free maternity and newborn care services in government hospitals. In 2010, the National Mission for Empowerment of Women was launched to promote gender equality and enhance women's participation in social and economic development.

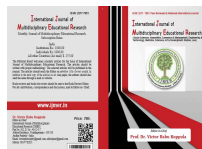
4. **Infrastructure and Energy:** In the field of infrastructure and energy, the government worked towards the expansion of the National Highways Development Project (NHDP) and focused on increasing power generation and rural electrification under the Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana. It also promoted renewable energy development through the Jawaharlal Nehru National Solar Mission, launched in 2010, which aimed to boost the use of solar power across the country.

5. **Foreign Policy:** India continued its strategic partnership with the United States, initiated during the first UPA term, and further strengthened its relations with neighboring countries such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The government also actively participated in international climate change negotiations, including the Copenhagen Summit held in 2009, reflecting its commitment to global environmental cooperation.

6. **Governance and Anti-Corruption Measures:** The government took several steps to promote transparency and accountability. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act was passed in 2013 following nationwide anti-corruption protests led by Anna Hazare. Furthermore, several states introduced Right to Service Acts to ensure the timely delivery of public services and to make governance more transparent and citizen-friendly.

2014SIXTEENTHLOKSABHA ELECTIONS:

| S.NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|---------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | B.J. P | 282 |
| 2 | Congress | 44 |
| 3 | A.I.T.C | 34 |
| 4 | S. P | 05 |
| 5 | A.I.A.D.M. K | 37 |
| 6 | C.P.M | 09 |
| 7 | Telugudesam | 16 |
| 8 | Y.S.R.C. P | 09 |
| 9 | A.A. P | 04 |
| 10 | Shivasena | 18 |



Cover Page



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| | | |
|----|-----------|-----|
| 11 | B.J. D | 20 |
| 12 | N.C. P | 06 |
| 13 | R.J.D | 04 |
| 14 | T.R. S | 11 |
| 15 | J.D(U) | 02 |
| 16 | C.P. I | 01 |
| 17 | J.D(S) | 02 |
| 18 | S.A.D | 04 |
| 19 | L.J.P | 06 |
| 20 | A.I.M.I.M | 01 |
| 21 | Others | 28 |
| | Total | 543 |

2014 SEVENTEENTH LOKSABHA ELECTIONS:

| S.NO | NAME OF THE WINNING PARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|------------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | B.J. P | 303 |
| 2 | Congress | 52 |
| 3 | A.I.T.C | 22 |
| 4 | B.S. P | 10 |
| 5 | S. P | 05 |
| 6 | Y.S.R.C. P | 22 |
| 7 | D.M.K | 24 |
| 8 | Shivasena | 18 |
| 9 | Telugudesam | 03 |
| 10 | C.P.M | 03 |
| 11 | B.J.D | 12 |
| 12 | J.D(U) | 16 |
| 13 | N.C.P | 05 |
| 14 | A.A.D.M.K | 01 |
| 15 | T.R.S | 09 |
| 16 | S.A.D | 02 |
| 17 | C.P.I | 02 |
| 18 | J.D(S) | 01 |
| 19 | L.J.P | 06 |
| 20 | A.A.P | 01 |
| 21 | J.M.M | 01 |
| 22 | A.I.M.I.M | 02 |
| 23 | Others | 23 |
| | Total | 543 |



2024 EIGHTEENTHLOKSABHAELECTIONS:

| S.NO | NAMEOF THE WINNINGPARTY | NO. OF SEATS WON |
|------|----------------------------|------------------|
| 1 | B.J.P | 240 |
| 2 | Telugudesam | 16 |
| 3 | J.D(U) | 12 |
| 4 | Shivasena | 07 |
| 5 | L.J.P | 05 |
| 6 | J.D(S) | 02 |
| 7 | N.C.P | 01 |
| 8 | Janasena | 02 |
| 9 | A.G.P | 01 |
| 10 | Congress | 99 |
| 11 | S.P | 37 |
| 12 | A.I.T.C | 29 |
| 13 | D.M.K | 22 |
| 14 | C.P.M | 04 |
| 15 | R.J.D | 04 |
| 16 | Shivasena(UBT) | 09 |
| 17 | A.A.P | 03 |
| 18 | N.C.P | 08 |
| 19 | C.P.I | 02 |
| 20 | J.M.M | 03 |
| 21 | Y.S.R.C.P | 04 |
| 22 | A.I.M.I.M | 01 |
| 23 | Others | 32 |
| | Total | 543 |

SEVENTH, EIGHTH & NINETH Coalition Governments (National Democratic Alliance):

In the 16th, 17th, and 18th Lok Sabha Elections, which were held in 2014, 2019, and 2024. The Bharatiya Janata Party-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won a clear majority. Sri Narendra Modi has been continuing as the Prime Minister since 2014 onwards. Here's a breakdown of the policies and programs of the Narendra Modi government:

2014-2019

Economic Reforms: Demonetization, Goods and Services Tax (GST), Make in India, Startup India, Digital India

Social Welfare: Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Ayushman Bharat, Ujjwala Yojana, Swachh Bharat Abhiyan

Infrastructure: Smart Cities Mission, AMRUT Plan, Bharatmala Project, Sagarmala Project

Agriculture: Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Soil Health Card Scheme, E-NAM (National Agriculture Market)



2019-2024

Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA): Amended the citizenship law to provide a path to Indian citizenship for persecuted minorities from neighboring countries. Abolition of Article 370: Revoked the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. Triple Talaq Bill: Criminalized instant triple talaq. Ayushman Bharat: Expanded health insurance coverage to economically vulnerable families. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN): Direct income support to farmers. Jal Jeevan Mission: Piped water supply to rural households.

2024 onwards

National Education Policy 2020: Comprehensive frame work for education reform. Digital India: Expanded digital infrastructure and services. Make in India 2.0: Enhanced focus on manufacturing and exports. Infrastructure Development: Continued investment in roads, railways, and airports. Sustainable Development: Initiatives like International Solar Alliance and National Hydrogen Mission. These policies and programs reflect the government's focus on economic growth, social welfare, and infrastructure development.

Conclusion:

The Janata Government led by Morarji Desai and Charan Singh, the National Front government led by V.P. Singh and Chandra Sekhar, the United Front government led by H.D. Deve Gowda and I.K. Gujral, and the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by A.B. Vajpayee did not remain in power for the full term of five years. But the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government led by A.B. Vajpayee from 1999 to 2004, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government led by Dr. Manmohan Singh from 2004 to 2014, remained in power for the full term of five years. The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government led by Narendra Modi has been in power since 2014 to date.

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Cover Page



REVISITING THE BASIC STRUCTURE DOCTRINE: LEGAL STRATEGIES FOR PROTECTING INDIA'S DEMOCRATIC ETHOS TOWARDS 2047

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Abstract

The Basic Structure Doctrine, propounded by the Supreme Court of India in the landmark 1973 case of *Kesavananda Bharati v. State of Kerala* [1], represents one of the most significant judicial innovations in global constitutional law. This paper examines the doctrine's essential role in safeguarding India's democratic ethos against potential legislative overreach, particularly as the nation progresses towards the centenary of its independence in 2047. It traces the doctrine's evolution over seven decades, analyzes its continuing relevance as a bulwark against majoritarianism and authoritarianism, and proposes a future roadmap for its clear and consistent application to ensure the enduring stability and vitality of the Constitution. The doctrine ensures that while the Parliament has the power to amend the Constitution, it cannot alter its core identity, thus maintaining a crucial balance between constitutional flexibility and constitutional permanence.

Keywords: *Basic Structure Doctrine, majoritarianism, authoritarianism, roadmap.*

Introduction: The Genesis and Core of the Doctrine

The Indian Constitution, adopted in 1950, provides a framework for a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic. Article 368 grants the Parliament the power to amend the Constitution. However, the initial decades witnessed a constitutional struggle between the Parliament, seeking to implement socio-economic reforms, and the Judiciary, safeguarding Fundamental Rights. Cases like *Shankari Prasad v. Union of India* (1951) and *Sajjan Singh v. State of Rajasthan* (1965) initially affirmed Parliament's sweeping power to amend, even Fundamental Rights. This was challenged in *I.C. Golak Nath v. State of Punjab* (1967) [2], where the Supreme Court reversed its stance, holding that Parliament could not abridge Fundamental Rights, treating a constitutional amendment as 'law' under Article 13.

The Parliament responded with the 24th, 25th, and 29th Constitutional Amendment Acts, seeking to restore its unrestricted amending power and insulate certain laws from judicial review. This constitutional crisis culminated in the *Kesavananda Bharati* case. The 7:6 majority verdict held that Parliament's amending power under Article 368 is **constituent but limited** [3]. While Parliament can amend any provision, it cannot "alter, damage, or destroy" the **Basic Structure** or framework of the Constitution [4]. The doctrine, though not explicitly defined, has been interpreted through subsequent judgments to include features such as:

- Supremacy of the Constitution
- Republican and Democratic form of Government
- Secular and Federal character



- Separation of Powers
- Judicial Review [5]

II. Relevance of the Basic Structure Doctrine

The Basic Structure Doctrine is indispensable for the survival of India's constitutional democracy. Its relevance can be understood through several critical functions:

A. Safeguarding Constitutional Identity

The doctrine ensures that the Constitution remains true to the fundamental political, social, and economic philosophy envisioned by the Constituent Assembly. It acts as a **moral compass** that prevents a temporary legislative majority from fundamentally changing the nature of the Republic [6]. Without this limitation, the entire Constitution could be replaced, robbing it of its original identity.

B. A Bulwark Against Authoritarianism

Its most profound role is in acting as a check on majoritarian tendencies and potential authoritarianism. The doctrine was practically applied in *Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain* (1975) [7], where the Court struck down the unconstitutional **39th Amendment** for violating the basic feature of **free and fair elections** and the **rule of law**. Later, the Court in *Minerva Mills v. Union of India* (1980) [8] nullified parts of the **42nd Amendment**, reaffirming **judicial review** and the balance between Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles as parts of the basic structure. This demonstrated the doctrine's power to restore democracy from the brink.

C. Preserving the Balance of Power

By affirming the non-amendability of the Separation of Powers and Judicial Review, the doctrine preserves the delicate balance between the Legislature, Executive, and Judiciary. In the *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India* (2015) (NJAC Case) [9], the Court struck down the 99th Constitutional Amendment and the National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, reinforcing that **Judicial Independence** is a core component of the basic structure.

III. India's Experience: Seven Decades of Constitutional Evolution

The basic structure doctrine has been the cornerstone of Indian constitutional jurisprudence for over half a century, shaping the trajectory of the Republic.

A. The Formative Period (1973-1980)

Post-Kesavananda, the doctrine immediately faced its sternest test during the Emergency (1975-1977), where it served as the basis for judicial resistance to Parliament's attempts to confer unlimited amending power and restrict fundamental freedoms [10]. This period cemented the doctrine's identity as a **"safety valve"** against legislative excess.

B. Expansion and Refinement (1980s-2000s)

The scope of the basic structure has steadily evolved through judicial pronouncements. Landmark rulings added crucial components:

- **Secularism and Federalism** in *S.R. Bommai v. Union of India* (1994) [11].
- The principle of **equality** (Article 14) [12].



- The **power of judicial review** over laws placed in the Ninth Schedule after April 24, 1973 (*I.R. Coelho v. State of Tamil Nadu*, 2007) [13].

This evolutionary process has ensured that the Constitution remains a "living document," capable of adapting to societal changes without sacrificing its core values.

C. Contemporary Challenges and Tussles

The doctrine continues to be challenged and debated. Critics often cite its **vagueness** and the potential for **judicial overreach** by an "unelected" judiciary [14]. However, proponents argue that the open-ended nature allows the judiciary to address new threats to democracy that the framers could not have anticipated. Recent constitutional challenges, such as the debate over the abrogation of Article 370 or simultaneous elections, underscore the doctrine's ongoing role in maintaining India's unique democratic federal architecture [15].

IV. Future Roadmap for Safeguarding Democratic Ethos (Towards 2047)

As India prepares for its 100th year of independence, the Basic Structure Doctrine must be further strengthened and applied with clarity to meet emerging challenges.

A. Enhanced Judicial Consistency and Clarity

While the list of basic features remains non-exhaustive, the Judiciary must strive for greater **consistency and discipline** in its application. A dedicated, expanded Constitutional Bench of the Supreme Court should be tasked with systematically outlining the contours and tests for applying the doctrine, reducing the perception of judicial subjectivity and strengthening its legitimacy [16].

B. Promoting Constitutional Dialogue and Education

The doctrine should not be perceived as a weapon of the judiciary against the legislature, but as a shared constitutional heritage. There is a need for greater **public and parliamentary engagement** to foster a culture of *constitutionalism* where all organs of the state respect the inherent limitations of their powers. Educational and institutional reforms should be implemented to ensure the principles of the basic structure are understood as foundational to national identity.

C. Addressing Threats to Substantive Democracy

Looking towards 2047, the basic structure doctrine must proactively address emerging threats to the spirit of the Constitution, including:

- **Electoral Integrity:** Vigorously applying the principle of *free and fair elections* to modern challenges like digital manipulation and electoral funding transparency [17].
- **Federal Balance:** Using the federal basic feature to resolve center-state tensions, especially regarding resource allocation and legislative encroachment.
- **Fundamental Rights in the Digital Age:** Interpreting individual freedoms (Articles 19 and 21) as part of the basic structure in the context of surveillance, data privacy, and artificial intelligence [18].

V. Conclusion

The Basic Structure Doctrine is arguably the Indian Judiciary's greatest contribution to constitutional law, serving as the ultimate custodian of India's democratic and republican character. Born out of a need to limit the amending power of the Parliament, it has ensured that the foundational principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, enshrined in the Preamble, cannot be destroyed.



Revisiting this doctrine in the run-up to 2047 confirms its indispensable role. It is not a static legal provision but a **dynamic principle** that evolves to protect the "**soul of the Constitution**" against all forms of majoritarian impulses. For India to realize the vision of its framers and secure its democratic ethos for the next century, all constitutional functionaries must reaffirm their commitment to the Basic Structure, upholding its sanctity as the unshakeable foundation of the world's largest democracy.

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THE IMPACT OF URBANIZATION ON BIODIVERSITY: A STUDY OF URBAN ECOSYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

Urbanization is one of the most significant drivers of ecological change in the 21st century, reshaping landscapes and altering biodiversity patterns. Urbanization is rapidly transforming natural landscapes, leading to significant alterations in biodiversity and ecosystem functioning. It is characterized by the rapid expansion of cities and human infrastructure, which profoundly impacts biodiversity at genetic, species, and ecosystem levels. This study examines how urban growth leads to habitat loss, fragmentation, and biotic homogenization, often resulting in decreased native species richness and increased prevalence of invasive species. It highlights how increased land use, pollution, invasive species, climate modification, and habitat fragmentation affect flora and fauna. The analysis reveals that although urbanization poses major threats to biodiversity, well-designed urban ecosystems can support ecological restoration and coexistence between humans and nature. Urban areas can also create novel habitats supporting both native and non-native species, sometimes serving as refuges amidst regional biodiversity loss. The paper explores species adaptation and resilience within urban ecosystems and emphasizes the importance of green spaces and habitat connectivity for biodiversity conservation. The paper concludes with strategies for enhancing urban biodiversity through sustainable planning, conservation initiatives, and community engagement.

Key Words: *Urbanization, Biodiversity, Habitat, Ecosystem, Conservation, Sustainability.*

Statement of the Problem

Urbanization is a dominant global trend, reshaping landscapes, economies, and ecological systems. It is a defining global trend, with over half the world's population now living in cities. As cities grow, natural habitats are converted into built environments, resulting in profound impacts on biodiversity. According to UN projections, nearly 70% of the world's population will live in cities by 2050, intensifying pressure on land, water, and natural resources.

Urban ecosystems comprising parks, lakes, wetlands, roadside vegetation, and green infrastructure represent the intersection of human-built environments and natural systems. Understanding how urbanization affects biodiversity is crucial for designing sustainable and ecologically resilient cities. This paper investigates the relationship between urbanization and biodiversity, exploring patterns of habitat loss, species decline, ecological imbalance, and the potential for urban areas to support conservation.

Objectives of the Study

- To analyses the major impacts of urbanization on biodiversity.
- To examine ecosystem changes in urban environments.



Cover Page



- To evaluate global and Indian case studies on urban biodiversity.
- To propose strategies for enhancing biodiversity within cities.

Methodology

The study is based on qualitative analysis using:

- Secondary literature from journals and environmental reports
- Case studies of urban biodiversity projects
- Urban ecological assessments
- Data was categorized under key themes such as habitat fragmentation, species decline, pollution, invasive species, and ecological restoration.

Understanding Urbanization and Urban Ecosystems

Urbanization refers to the increase in human population living in urban areas, accompanied by the expansion of infrastructure, industrialization, and land conversion.

Biodiversity: Variety of species, genetic diversity, and ecosystem functions

Urban Ecosystems- Hybrid landscapes where natural and human systems interact.

Urban ecosystems include:

- ❖ Parks, gardens, and green belts
- ❖ Urban forests
- ❖ Rivers, lakes, and wetlands
- ❖ Roadside plantations
- ❖ Brownfields and vacant lots
- ❖ Rooftop gardens and green walls

These ecosystems support wildlife, provide ecological services, and improve human well-being.

5. Impacts of Urbanization on Biodiversity

a) Habitat Loss and Fragmentation- Conversion of forests, wetlands, and grasslands into built-up areas. Urban sprawl reduces continuous natural habitats into isolated patches, affecting species movement, breeding, and survival. Fragmentation leads to loss of large mammals, reptiles, and sensitive plant species by reducing species survival and genetic diversity.

b) Decline in Native Species Diversity-Native species often cannot adapt to urban conditions (noise, lights, pollutants, human presence). Sensitive species decline while adaptable species (pigeons, crows, rats) dominate.

c)Introduction of Invasive Species-Cities facilitate the movement of invasive species such as Lantana camara, Prosopis juliflora, and certain bird species, which displace native flora and fauna.

d) Pollution and Climate Stress: Air, water, soil, and noise pollution alter habitat quality.

Examples:

- ❖ Contaminated lakes reduce fish and other aquatic populations



- ❖ Air pollution affects plant physiology.
- ❖ Noise pollution is impacting bird communication and breeding.

e) Altered Microclimate and Urban Heat Island Effect-Urban heat islands alter species distribution and phenology. Urban areas experience higher temperatures, affecting species sensitive to heat stress. This leads to loss of biodiversity and changes in migration patterns.

f) Disruption of Ecological Processes-Urbanization disrupts natural cycles such as pollination, seed dispersal, predator-prey relationships, and nutrient cycling.

g) Human-Wildlife Conflicts-Encounters between people and wildlife increase due to shrinking habitats, leading to casualties on both sides.

6. Opportunities for Biodiversity in Urban Areas

Urban Green Spaces

Parks, gardens, and wetlands act as biodiversity refuges.
Green roofs and vertical gardens enhance microhabitats.

Ecological Corridors

Linking fragmented habitats through green belts and river systems.

Community Participation

Citizen science, urban farming, and local conservation initiatives.

Policy and Planning

Integrating biodiversity into urban master plans.

7. Case Studies of Urban Biodiversity

a) Singapore: A Biophilic City

- ❖ Uses green roofs, sky gardens, and nature parks
- ❖ Restoration of mangroves and wetlands
- ❖ Maintains high biodiversity despite dense urbanization.

b) Bengaluru, India

- Once known as the "City of Lakes."
- Urban expansion caused loss of wetlands and biodiversity
- Recent lake rejuvenation projects restored bird and fish populations

c) New York City, USA

- ❖ Central Park supports more than 230 bird species



- ❖ Urban forests enhance biodiversity and carbon sequestration

d) Delhi, India

- ❖ Aravalli Biodiversity Park and Yamuna Biodiversity Park restored degraded lands
- ❖ Supports native flora and fauna
- ❖ Acts as an ecological buffer

These examples demonstrate that cities can sustain biodiversity with effective planning.

Ecosystem Services Provided by Urban Biodiversity

Urban biodiversity contributes to:

1) Environmental Services like air purification, Water filtration, Urban temperature regulation, and Soil stabilization

a. Air Purification: Urban vegetation, especially trees, absorbs pollutants such as Carbon dioxide, sulfur dioxide, and particulate matter, improving air quality and reducing health risks associated with pollution.

b. Water filtration: Wetlands, green spaces, and permeable soils naturally filter rainwater by removing sediments and contaminants. This helps recharge groundwater and reduces the burden on urban drainage systems.

c. Urban temperature regulation: Trees, parks, and green roofs cool the environment by providing shade and releasing moisture through transpiration. This reduces the urban heat island effect and lowers energy consumption.

d. Soil stabilization: Plant roots bind soil, preventing erosion. Green cover also reduces surface runoff during heavy rains, protecting urban infrastructure and maintaining soil quality.

2) Ecological Services like Pollination, Seed dispersal, Habitat provision, Nutrient cycling

a. Pollination: Biodiversity-rich urban areas support pollinators such as bees, butterflies, and birds. These species help maintain plant reproduction and enhance urban food gardens and landscapes.

b. Seed dispersal: Birds, mammals, and insects disperse seeds across urban landscapes, helping natural regeneration and maintaining plant diversity within cities.

c. Habitat provision: Urban green spaces like parks, forests, and wetlands serve as habitats for various species. They provide food, shelter, and breeding grounds, supporting diverse urban wildlife.

d. Nutrient cycling: Plants and soil organisms decompose organic matter, returning nutrients to the soil. This supports healthy plant growth and maintains soil fertility in urban ecosystems.

3) Social and Health Benefits like Stress reduction, Recreational spaces, Green aesthetics, and Educational opportunities.



a. Stress reduction-Access to natural green spaces reduces anxiety, improves mental health, and promotes emotional well-being by providing peaceful environments.

b. Recreational spaces-Parks, gardens, and open green areas offer spaces for physical activities such as walking, jogging, and sports, improving public health and social interaction.

c. Green Aesthetics-Urban greenery improves visual appeal and contributes to a pleasant living environment, improving quality of life and creating more pleasant living environments.

d. Educational Opportunities-Urban ecosystems offer hands-on learning experiences for students and citizens. They help raise awareness about biodiversity, conservation, and sustainability.

9. Strategies to Enhance Urban Biodiversity Strengthening Urban Green Infrastructure

- ❖ **Urban forests**: Urban forests consist of groups of trees and vegetation within city limits. They improve air quality, lower temperatures, support bird and insect species, and provide recreational spaces for residents. These forests also act as natural carbon sinks and enhance ecological balance in urban areas.
- ❖ **Green belts and buffer zones**: Green belts are designated open spaces or vegetated areas surrounding or within cities. They restrict uncontrolled urban expansion, preserve natural habitats, and maintain ecological connectivity. Buffer zones around lakes, rivers, and parks help reduce pollution, protect wildlife, and sustain healthy ecosystems.
- ❖ **Green rooftops and vertical gardens**: Green roofs and vertical gardens add vegetation to building surfaces, increasing urban green cover without requiring additional land. They reduce heat island effects, improve insulation, filter pollutants, support pollinators, and create microhabitats for small species.

Protecting and Restoring Natural Habitats

- ❖ **Wetland restoration**-Restoring degraded wetlands involves improving water quality, re-establishing native plants, and allowing natural hydrological cycles to function. Healthy wetlands support diverse species, control floods, recharge groundwater, and act as nurseries for many aquatic organisms.
- ❖ **River rejuvenation**-River rejuvenation focuses on removing pollution, restoring natural river flows, protecting riverbanks, and enhancing biodiversity. Clean, free-flowing rivers support fish populations, aquatic plants, birds, and improve overall ecological health within cities.
- ❖ **Native vegetation planting**-Planting native species strengthens local ecosystems because these plants are adapted to the region's climate and soil. Native vegetation supports native insects, birds, and other wildlife, promotes ecological balance, and requires less maintenance compared to exotic species.



Developing Ecological Corridors- Connecting parks, forests, wetlands, and lakes creates continuous pathways that support wildlife movement, allowing animals and plants to move freely across the city. These corridors reduce habitat isolation, support species migration, and maintain healthy genetic diversity.

Biodiversity-Sensitive Urban Planning

- Avoiding fragmentation, conserving critical habitats-Urban planning should minimize dividing natural areas into isolated patches. Protecting core habitats ensures the long-term survival of native species.
- Limiting construction in eco-sensitive zones-Development must be controlled near wetlands, forests, riverbanks, and hillocks to prevent ecological damage and maintain natural resilience.
- Zoning regulations for conservation-Cities can designate ecological zones, green belts, and no-development areas to safeguard biodiversity and restrict harmful activities.
- Environmental impact assessments-Before undertaking major urban projects, assessments help identify ecological risks and ensure mitigation measures to protect biodiversity.

Education and awareness: Raising public awareness encourages citizens to participate in conservation efforts. Community groups and volunteers engage in tree planting, lake restoration, clean-up drives, and biodiversity monitoring, strengthening environmental stewardship.

Empowering citizens to value biodiversity. Citizen groups play a major role in tree planting, lake rejuvenation, and biodiversity monitoring.

Technology and Data Systems

- GIS mapping of biodiversity-Geographic Information Systems help identify species-rich areas, track habitat changes, and support strategic conservation planning.
- Drone monitoring-Drones provide real-time images for monitoring wildlife, vegetation health, wetlands, and illegal activities like encroachments.
- Citizen science apps for species reporting-Mobile apps allow residents to document birds, insects, plants, and wildlife sightings, contributing valuable data for research and policymaking.

Policy and Governance-Municipal bodies must adopt biodiversity action plans, enforce environmental laws, and ensure ecological considerations are integrated into all urban development projects. Strong governance is essential for long-term conservation success.

10. Challenges in Conserving Urban Biodiversity

- ❖ Rapid and unplanned urban expansion: Haphazard development destroys natural habitats and increases ecological fragmentation.



- ❖ Limited awareness among citizens: Many people are unaware of biodiversity's importance, reducing community participation in conservation.
- ❖ Weak enforcement of environmental regulations: Laws exist but are often poorly implemented, leading to habitat encroachment and pollution.
- ❖ High land value competing with conservation goals: Urban land demands often prioritize real estate over ecological spaces, reducing green areas.
- ❖ Climate change impacts: Rising temperatures, irregular rainfall, and extreme weather events further stress urban ecosystems.
- ❖ Lack of data on urban biodiversity: Insufficient scientific data limits informed decision-making for conservation efforts.
- ❖ Pollution and invasive species: Air, water, and soil pollution degrade habitats, while invasive plants and animals outcompete native species.

Conclusion

Urbanization significantly impacts biodiversity, leading to loss of habitats, species decline, ecological imbalance, and environmental degradation. However, urban ecosystems also present opportunities for innovative conservation, ecological restoration, and community engagement. By integrating ecological principles into urban planning, fostering community participation, and adopting nature-based solutions, urban ecosystems can become resilient and sustainable. Cities can support rich biodiversity when planned with ecological sensitivity, incorporating green infrastructure, habitat restoration, ecological corridors, and citizen participation. This study emphasizes the need for biodiversity-centric urban planning to ensure sustainable and resilient urban futures and human development.

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Cover Page



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REPUBLIC"

THE TRIAD CHALLENGE: BALANCING DEVELOPMENT, EQUITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY IN INDIA'S CENTENNIAL YEAR

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ABSTRACT

India's vision for 2047 rests on the simultaneous achievement of three often-conflicting objectives: robust economic Development, profound socio-economic Equity, and environmental Sustainability. This paper analyzes the critical trade-offs inherent in this "Triad Challenge," arguing that traditional, growth-first policy models are insufficient for securing a truly developed and enduring republic. The central research question explores how India can forge a path of integrated policy-making that harmonizes these goals rather than sacrificing one for the other. The immediate conflict is starkly revealed by current metrics. While India targets a \$30 trillion economy by 2047 (Development), the nation's wealth distribution remains highly skewed, with the top 10% of the population possessing approximately 77% of the national wealth (Equity challenge). Concurrently, rapid industrialization, crucial for economic growth, places immense stress on resources, threatening India's commitment to achieving 50% cumulative electric power from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030 (Sustainability challenge). These statistical realities demonstrate that an imbalanced pursuit of growth perpetuates inequality and deepens the ecological footprint.

This study proposes a framework of "Sustainable Equity Governance" that prioritizes justice and ecological stewardship as prerequisites for, rather than outcomes of, development. It advocates for institutionalizing environmental cost accounting in national planning and implementing universal basic services to mitigate inequality. The paper concludes by outlining sector-specific policy prescriptions, including circular economy models and targeted social spending, necessary to steer India away from the path of uneven progress and toward a balanced outcome where all three pillars—Development, Equity, and Sustainability—are mutually reinforced, ensuring the democratic longevity and stability of the Republic by its centennial year.

Keywords: *Triad Challenge, ecological footprint, circular economy models, democratic longevity.*

Introduction: The Centennial Mandate and the Policy Inflexion Point

The Government of India's vision for Viksit Bharat by 2047 is a profound national ambition: to transform the republic into a fully developed nation by its centennial year. This vision is explicitly anchored in the simultaneous achievement of three critical, yet often conflicting, objectives: robust economic Development, profound socio-economic Equity, and environmental Sustainability. This aspiration goes beyond mere economic expansion; it commits to a holistic, green, resilient, and inclusive developmental pathway for all citizens.



The Quantitative Frame and the Inherent Conflict

The Development pillar is quantitatively framed by the target of achieving a \$30 trillion economy. However, the pursuit of traditional, high-throughput economic growth generates an immediate structural incompatibility with the other two pillars. Economic growth frequently mandates rapid industrialization and infrastructure expansion, leading to job creation and wealth accumulation. Yet, this path often results in severe environmental degradation, pollution, and the depletion of natural resources.

The conflict is starkly revealed by current metrics that illustrate the severity of the Triad Challenge. While India is the fastest-growing major economy, the nation's wealth distribution remains highly skewed. Data confirms that the top 1% income and wealth shares are at historical peaks, with the top 10% of the population possessing approximately 77% of the national wealth. This concentration represents the profound failure to achieve structural Equity. Concurrently, rapid economic activity places immense stress on the environment, creating a paradox: although India has made significant strides in renewable energy capacity, achieving over 51% non-fossil fuel installed electric power capacity by September 2025, five years ahead of its COP26 commitment, the country's ecological health outcomes are catastrophic, ranking 176th out of 180 countries in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index (EPI).

These statistical realities validate the central thesis of this paper: an imbalanced pursuit of growth, divorced from structural social and ecological accountability, perpetuates inequality and deepens the ecological footprint, rendering the resulting development unstable.

Insufficiency of Traditional Growth Models

Historically, India's post-liberalization economic model, characterized by the dominant expansion of the services sector, has delivered high growth rates but has often been described as "jobless growth".⁸ This favorable macroeconomic performance has not been a sufficient condition for significant improvements in human development indicators.⁸ This structural pattern reinforces the conclusion that the traditional 'growth-first, redistribute/clean-up later' paradigm is inherently incapable of securing a truly developed and enduring republic. The high social and financial costs imposed by pollution and resource degradation (e.g., urban air pollution, inadequate sanitation) directly undermine the long-term potential of the economy.

This study proposes a fundamental policy inflexion point: the institutionalization of the **Sustainable Equity Governance (SEG)** framework. The SEG framework moves away from treating justice and ecological stewardship as ancillary outcomes of development, instead mandating them as institutionalized prerequisites for sustained, high-quality economic growth.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objectives of this study are structured to analyze the systemic barriers within the Triad Challenge and articulate the necessary policy shift toward integrated governance:

1. To critically assess the quantitative misalignment between India's ambitious growth trajectory and the severe deficits in socio-economic equity and environmental health outcomes (specifically the wealth concentration and EPI ranking).



2. To evaluate the limitations of traditional economic accounting and conditional welfare delivery in addressing structural inequality and securing ecological resilience in a rapidly industrializing democracy.
3. To develop a detailed, integrated policy framework, Sustainable Equity Governance (SEG), articulating how its components—Environmental Cost Accounting (ECA), Universal Basic Services (UBS), and Circular Economy Models (CEM)—can achieve policy synergy.
4. To provide clear, sector-specific policy prescriptions necessary for transitioning India towards resource efficiency and equitable distribution, ensuring the longevity of the Viksit Bharat vision by 2047.

Hypothesis

The achievement of the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision requires a fundamental and deliberate shift from a linear, growth-first paradigm to a strategy of **Sustainable Equity Governance (SEG)**, wherein ecological stewardship (through rigorous Environmental Cost Accounting) and equitable resource distribution (through robust Universal Basic Services) are institutionalized **prerequisites** for, rather than ancillary outcomes of, sustainable economic development.

Relevance of the Study

Domestic Policy Imperative: Addressing Democratic Longevity

The Triad Challenge is not merely an economic or ecological problem; it is a direct threat to the political stability and democratic longevity of the Republic. The combination of extreme wealth concentration and rapid environmental degradation generates heightened socio-political friction and public discontent [Abstract]. Unchecked environmental costs, such as competition over scarce clean water or the high human cost of air pollution, intensify conflicts, particularly among marginalized communities.

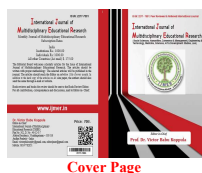
A highly unequal and ecologically distressed society faces systemic risks. This policy-induced instability directly impedes effective coordination between different levels of government and implements consistent, long-term strategic actions—which are crucial for realizing the Viksit Bharat vision—erratic and unreliable. By formally integrating equity and environmental justice into the policy mechanism via the SEG framework, the state aims to preemptively mitigate these structural risks, thereby securing the foundations of governance necessary for sustained development.

Global Development Modeling

India's scale and complexity make its developmental path a critical blueprint for the developing world. Many emerging economies face similar pressures to industrialize rapidly while confronting accelerating climate change and deep inequality. This study offers a vital contribution to global development economics by providing an alternative to the historically extractive and destabilizing models of growth. By demonstrating the feasibility of integrated policies that prioritize ecological and social justice, India can lead by example, championing a balanced approach over linear extraction.

Scholarly and Policy Contribution

This research makes a definitive scholarly contribution by formalizing a framework that structurally links two previously disparate policy tools: environmental accounting and structural equity measures.



It utilizes the internationally recognized System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and integrates it with the concept of Universal Basic Services (UBS). This integrated analytical lens provides policymakers with the tools to move beyond siloed ministerial action toward cohesive, evidence-based policy frameworks required to address dynamic challenges such as economic volatility, climate change, and technological disruption.

Findings: Analysis of the Triad Imbalance and Policy Failures

5.1. The Stark Reality of Economic Inequality

Analysis confirms that the high-growth phase India has experienced since the early 2000s has been strongly accompanied by an accelerating rise in inequality. By 2022-23, the top 1% income and wealth shares stood at their highest historical levels, with the top 1% possessing 40.1% of the national wealth. This severe concentration means that while the economy grows rapidly, the benefits are primarily channeled to the top deciles, negating the inclusive intent of the Viksit Bharat vision.

This wealth concentration is not an inevitable side effect of capitalism; rather, it is the direct outcome of policy and taxation choices. The evidence suggests that the current Indian income tax system may be regressive when viewed through the lens of net wealth, contributing to the soaring top-end inequality.⁵ To mitigate this structural fault, international organizations advocate for countries to aim for an income Gini coefficient of less than 0.3 and implement realistic, time-bound National Inequality Reduction Plans (NIRPs).

Furthermore, the nature of development matters critically. Research demonstrates that increasing economic complexity—which involves diversifying production structures toward higher-skill, technology-intensive output—can reverse the positive correlation between natural resource dependence and income inequality.¹⁵ This structural insight implies that the only form of sustainable development requires high-quality human capital and technological sophistication, creating jobs that offer high returns to skills rather than relying on resource extraction that typically concentrates profits. Therefore, addressing inequality requires not just redistribution, but a fundamental shift in the structure of economic activity.

5.2. The Sustainability Paradox: Energy Target Success vs. Ecological Health Crisis

A critical nuance in analyzing India's sustainability pillar is the dissociation between achieving energy *input* targets and securing ecological *outcomes*. India has successfully met a key global climate commitment, achieving over 51% of its installed electric power capacity from non-fossil fuel sources by September 2025.⁶ This demonstrates high policy efficacy in accelerating renewable energy deployment through targeted sectoral initiatives, achieving a major COP26 goal five years ahead of schedule.

However, this success masks a pervasive and ongoing ecological health crisis. India's subsequent ranking of 176th out of 180 countries in the 2024 Environmental Performance Index (EPI) indicates a persistent, profound failure in core areas such as air quality, water resources, and biodiversity. This sharp dichotomy confirms that relying solely on energy generation metrics fails to capture the true burden of development.

The environmental stressor is the massive social and financial cost imposed by resource degradation. These costs include substantial losses due to urban and indoor air pollution, inadequate water supply,



and soil erosion. This analysis confirms that the pursuit of economic growth has serious, increasing health consequences, resulting in a high social cost that traditional economic models ignore. The governance focus must therefore immediately shift from achieving specific, narrow capacity targets toward measuring, valuing, and mitigating systemic ecological degradation, necessitating the integration of environmental cost quantification into national economic planning.

5.3. The Socio-Ecological Trade-Off

The trade-offs inherent in rapid development are not geographically or socially neutral. Environmental protection policies, while vital for long-term ecological stability, can impose immediate costs on businesses and may slow economic activities. Crucially, the absence or inadequacy of these policies means that the environmental damage driven by industrialization is disproportionately borne by marginalized communities. This externalization of pollution costs onto the poor reinforces income inequality and creates severe health disparities, thereby fundamentally undermining the Equity pillar.⁴ For instance, the degradation of communal land or water resources affects the bottom half of the population most severely, as they rely directly on natural capital for livelihoods. Therefore, effective policymaking must proactively address these equity considerations, ensuring environmental policies are fair and that the burden of industrial waste and pollution is not shifted onto those least capable of bearing it. Environmental justice is, consequently, a core equity issue.

The Proposed Framework: Operationalizing Sustainable Equity Governance (SEG)

The complexity of the Triad Challenge necessitates an integrated governance architecture. The proposed Sustainable Equity Governance (SEG) framework rests on three mutually reinforcing pillars designed to harmonize Development, Equity, and Sustainability.

6.1. Pillar I: Institutionalizing Environmental Cost Accounting (ECA)

ECA is the foundational strategy for integrating ecological stewardship into national decision-making. Also known as green accounting, this methodology incorporates environmental factors and costs into financial results, acknowledging that traditional accounting systems fail to capture the degradation of natural resources.

India has a clear roadmap for this integration through the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's (MoSPI) "Strategy for Environmental-Economic Accounts in India 2022-2026."¹¹ This strategy utilizes the internationally agreed System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) framework, which comprises the SEEA-Central Framework (SEEA-CF), focusing on individual environmental assets (like water and energy), and the SEEA-Ecosystem Accounting (SEEA-EA), which assesses ecosystem services and their flows.

The policy imperative for ECA is clear: it mandates that the true costs of environmental damage—such as the massive healthcare expenditures resulting from air and water pollution⁹—are internalized and reflected in national economic performance metrics. MoSPI's work, compiling accounts for land use, water, and valuing ecosystem services such as carbon retention by forests, provides the data necessary to transition from Gross Domestic Product (GDP) to genuine Green National Accounts. Furthermore, aligning SEEA accounts with Government Budget Statements, as recommended by the



Supreme Audit Institution of India, enforces fiscal responsibility and accountability for environmental damage, fundamentally transforming governance from reactive pollution control to proactive natural capital management.

6.2. Pillar II: Universal Basic Services (UBS) as a Structural Equity Tool

To mitigate soaring inequality and build the necessary human capital for a complex economy, the SEG framework prioritizes Universal Basic Services (UBS) over Universal Basic Income (UBI). While UBI involves periodic, unconditional cash transfers to all residents¹⁷, UBS guarantees entitlement to essential public services—including high-quality health, education, and digital infrastructure—based on need, not ability to pay.

UBS is argued to be a more structural and sustainable tool for India. While UBI faces significant risks, including fiscal strain, inflationary pressure, and the potential for crowding out critical health and education spending, UBI directly addresses the core goals of social security, opportunity, and participation. UBS avoids the ethical debate of potential "moral hazard" associated with unconditional payments and, instead, focuses government resources on building durable infrastructure and high-quality collective services.

The efficacy of targeted social investment is empirically validated by India's recent success in poverty reduction. The National Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) Progress Review demonstrated remarkable progress, with significant reductions in the headcount ratio between 2015-16 and 2019-21.²⁰ This achievement confirms that structural interventions focusing on simultaneous deprivations across health, education, and living standards yield powerful, enduring equity results.²¹ UBS builds upon this validated approach, ensuring the foundational health and education necessary for citizens to participate fully in the higher-complexity economy needed to mitigate resource-driven inequality.¹⁵ This direct link establishes Equity as a necessary input for robust Development.

6.3. Seg Framework Components and Harmony

The Sustainable Equity Governance (SEG) framework integrates these components to ensure mutual reinforcement across the Development Triad.

Components of the Sustainable Equity Governance (SEG) Framework

| SEG Pillar | Policy Mechanism | Objective | Operational Anchor in India | Triad Harmony Link |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| Ecological Internalization | Environmental Cost Accounting (ECA) | Mandatory resource valuation and cost visibility | MoSPI SEEA Strategy 2022-2026 ¹¹ | Development accountable to Sustainability |
| Structural Redistribution | Universal Basic Services (UBS) | Build human capital; mitigate structural inequality | Expansion of existing targeted social spending ¹² | Equity as a basis for high-complexity Development |
| Systemic Efficiency | Circular Economy Models (CEM) | Decouple economic activity from resource consumption | Sectoral mandates and investment in waste-to-wealth ²² | Sustainability through efficiency; Equity through formalization |



Policy Prescriptions and Sectoral Harmonization (Suggestions)

The SEG framework translates into concrete, sector-specific policy prescriptions necessary to steer India toward balanced progress.

7.1. Accelerating Circular Economy Models (CEM) for Systemic Decoupling

The achievement of a \$30 trillion economy must be decoupled from linear, unsustainable resource throughput to address India's severe resource depletion, evidenced by the low EPI ranking.⁴ Circular Economy Models (CEM) provide the strategic mechanism for this decoupling. Policymakers must mandate the replication and scaling of successful digital and technology-led circular economy initiatives. A notable case is Recykal, which has driven efficiency and traceability in the complex plastic waste management sector through a digital platform. This model has attracted significant funding, including a \$26 million round from investors, demonstrating the commercial viability of formalized circularity.²² The scaling of such digital marketplaces ensures standardization and bolsters the investment case for resource efficiency.

Crucially, CEM must be linked to the Equity pillar. The expansion of the circular economy must explicitly extend ethical business practices throughout the waste supply chain, focusing on the dignity and formalization of labor for the informal sector workers. Furthermore, policy should establish high, time-bound targets for mandatory recycled content use in high-volume industries, particularly construction materials, steel, and battery manufacturing, leveraging lessons from global actors like the EU.

7.2. Fiscal Reforms and Resource Mobilization

Funding the investment required for UBS expansion and ecological restoration necessitates fundamental fiscal restructuring to address the regressive nature of current tax structures. First, the government must implement highly progressive direct tax reforms. This includes revisiting the potential for wealth, inheritance, or enhanced capital gains taxes to fund structural social spending, specifically responding to the data showing extreme wealth concentration at the top 1%. Second, to internalize environmental externalities, a phased, national carbon fee or Environmental Levy should be introduced. Revenues generated from this levy must be explicitly ring-fenced to finance ecological restoration projects and climate adaptation measures. This mechanism monetizes the previously externalized environmental costs and aligns corporate economic incentives with sustainability goals.

7.3. Adaptive and Integrated Governance

Effective SEG implementation demands radical inter-ministerial coordination and transparent data management. NITI Aayog, as India's premier policy think tank, should be mandated to establish an inter-ministerial "Triad Coordination Cell." This cell would be responsible for validating all major policy proposals against the SEG compliance criteria: Environmental Cost Accounting adherence, structural Equity impact assessment, and Circular Economy Model alignment. This structural oversight prevents the creation of siloed policies that inadvertently undermine one of the three pillars. Finally, the government must prioritize strengthening data quality and transparency. As current inequality data may represent a lower bound of the actual disparity, improved access to official data is essential to enable evidence-based public debates and accurate monitoring of SEG outcomes.



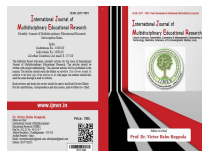
Conclusion: Towards Mutually Reinforcing Development in 2047

The Viksit Bharat 2047 vision is a mandate for structural transformation, not merely quantitative expansion. The analysis demonstrates that the current path—characterized by success in achieving energy *input* targets (51% non-fossil capacity), overshadowed by catastrophic failures in ecological *outcomes* (EPI 176/180) and acute wealth concentration (40.1% wealth share for the top 1%)—is inherently unstable. Imbalanced growth generates severe socio-political risks that threaten the very democratic longevity and stability of the Republic.

The **Sustainable Equity Governance (SEG)** framework offers the necessary architectural shift. By institutionalizing Environmental Cost Accounting (ECA), the framework makes the \$30 trillion Development ambition fiscally and ecologically accountable to Sustainability. By prioritizing Universal Basic Services (UBS), it transforms Equity from a welfare goal into a structural economic input, building the high-quality human capital required for diversified, complexity-driven development. Finally, the widespread adoption of Circular Economy Models (CEM) provides the operational mechanism to decouple growth from resource depletion, reinforcing both ecological health and social equity. By adopting SEG, India chooses a path of mutually reinforced progress, ensuring that the economic power achieved by 2047 is not only massive in scale but also enduring, just, and fully realized by all its citizens.

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Cover Page



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NEW DIMENSION OF THE INDIAN DEMOCRACY

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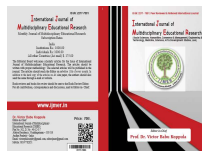
Abstract

The Indian experience runs against the widely held view that rich societies are much more likely to be democratic than poor ones, and that societies with large minority populations are prone to ethnic cleansing and civil war. Democracy in India, a poor and notoriously diverse country, has succeeded for more than half the twentieth century and seems likely to succeed as well in the twenty-first. The party-political domain of India is replete with a large number of parties representing the tapestry of Indian society. Many of them are based in specific regions and states, built around social and linguistic identities. While this enhanced the representative character of the parties, it also contributed to varied patterns of political competition and unstable governments. The two major national parties, the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party, becoming ready and willing to form coalitions, heralded an era of coalition governments both at the centre and states, enabling parties to increase their power and their pay-offs. Parties across the political spectrum have tended to converge on macroeconomic policy, but continue to diverge on social policies and larger issues that confront India, such as nation-building and secularism. Chronic lack of internal democracy coupled with the rise of political corruption and clientelism practices are matters of serious concern. A broader view of governance, resisting temptations to concentrate power and pursue personal enrichment would enable parties to deliver policies for a better, more just society.

Keywords: *India, democracy, governance, parties*

Introduction

We may deprecate India's political parties, the way they function and the means party leaders adopt to maximize electoral support. We may blame them for the ills we see in Indian society and political practice. Such an attitude is not unjustified. Yet we cannot ignore the role parties have played in bringing about a massive democratic political transformation over the past six decades since independence. This transformation was by no means inevitable; most former colonies went through periods of political instability, military coups, and authoritarian regimes, but India has moved towards law-based democratization. The mediating role political parties have played in bringing about this democratic transformation in a relatively peaceful manner, in a short span of time and under conditions considered not very conducive to democratic development, cannot be underestimated. They have assisted in the consolidation and expansion of democracy, popularized the notions of equality, social justice and freedom and opened doors for inclusion, voice and empowerment of the weaker sections of society. Superficially, political parties may appear to divide people, but parties also attenuate conflict, and show the way for people to come together. Thus, the party domain in India is full of intense struggle over contentious social and policy issues and also the space in which compromise and consensus are hammered out. What is required, therefore, is a critical and balanced assessment of parties that considers their strengths and achievements as well as their weaknesses and failings in furthering democracy and governance. Political parties in the Western democracies have



Cover Page



declined as mass democratic parties in recent decades, especially in terms of membership, not to speak of the dissolution of communist parties in Europe and Australia. Parties in India, by contrast, continue to be vibrant and have millions of members.

The self-reported membership of Indian parties ranges from about a million for the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI[M]) to about 40 million for the Congress, and more than 100 million for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). The average length of party membership or affiliation has indeed become short, as party members and supporters shift frequently from one party to the other, depending to a large extent on whether a party is in power or not. If we leave aside the strength and durability of party attachments, the fact remains that a large number of people are willing to attach themselves to a party at a given point in time. Parties occupy a central place in the collective life and imagination. They are a constant feature in the television and electronic media, constituting, along with cinema, the popular culture in India. The huge numbers of ordinary people who gather at the meetings of political leaders, either out of curiosity to see the leader, liking for the party, or out of an expectation of collective and individual welfare benefits, provide a testimony to the primacy of political parties to the people of India. Political parties have played a crucial role in effecting social and political transformation, but the domain of parties has also undergone tremendous change. In the decades following Independence, the plural and federal character of India's polity quickly asserted itself. Within two decades of the first general elections, the dominance of the Congress party began to crack. A large number of new parties emerged, and many of them became ruling parties at the national or state level or both. In many states, the national parties have been marginalized or become adjuncts to their state-based rivals. This flux in the party domain and the proliferation of parties have given rise to coalition governments, which have become a regular feature of Indian politics since the 1990s. A large number of parties have shared power in these coalitions over the years. For instance, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government, under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, ruled at the centre from 1999 to 2004 with about 30 different partners. The two governments formed by the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) also drew on the support of more than 10 alliance partners. Thus, the ability to secure the electoral support of regional and small parties has determined the fate of national parties in general elections over the past two decades. The BJP realized this in 1998, while the Congress took a few more years to accept the changed reality. In the 2014 Lok Sabha (lower house) elections, the BJP under Narendra Modi's leadership won an absolute majority. But it could do so only in alliance with several large and small parties in different states. In recognition of this situation, the party has formed a coalition government rather than a single-party government. Despite these alliances, the BJP has not been able to muster a majority in the Rajya Sabha (upper house), which has left the government unable to secure approval of major legislation. It is not certain whether the BJP alliance can reach the majority mark on its own by the time its term ends in 2019.

Historical background of Democracy

Democracy is derived from the Greek word Krates' meaning power or rule. Democracy thus means rule of the demos (the demos referring to the people, although the Greeks originally used this to mean the poor or the many. Thus, democracy essentially links the government to the people, and hence Abraham Lincoln's famous definition of Democracy, is government of the people, by the people, and for the people rightly expresses the spirit of democracy. Very broadly, democracy may mean the following.



Cover Page



1. The system of rule by the poor and disadvantaged.
2. A form of government in which the people rule themselves directly and without the need for professional politicians or public officials.
3. A society based on equal opportunity and individual merit rather than hierarchy and privileges.
4. A system of welfare and redistribution aimed at narrowing social inequalities.
5. A system of decision-making based on the principle of majority rule
6. A system of rules that secures the rights and interests of minorities by placing checks upon the power of the majority.
7. A means of filling public offices through a competitive struggle for the popular vote.
8. A system of government that serves the interests of people regardless of their participation in political life. Democracy is broadly classified as: Direct Democracy

Direct Democracy

It is also called participatory democracy. This was the first ever model of democracy introduced in the Greek city-state of Athens in the 3rd century BC. In this form of democracy, citizens participated in the affairs of the state directly and had a say in the governance of the city-state. Every citizen had a political right in the state. (Women and Slaves were not allowed to participate.) Direct democracy thus obliterates the distinction between government and the governed and between the state and civil society.

Features of Direct Democracy

It heightens the control that citizens can exercise over their own destinies, as it is the only pure form of government. It creates better-informed and more politically sophisticated citizens. It enables the public to express their own views and interests without having to rely on self-serving politicians.

Representative Democracy

Representative Democracy. It is also called limited or indirect democracy. The narrow meaning of representative democracy, as understood by many, is periodic voting after a stipulated time (in the case of India, it is every five years). However, the larger meaning of democracy is full participation in the day-to-day affairs of governance. The process of election is essentially to establish a link between the government and the governed.

Features of representative democracy:

It is a practicable form of democracy. It relieves ordinary citizens of the burden of decision-making, thus making it possible for a division of labour in politics. It allows governance to be placed in the hands of those with better education, expert knowledge, and greater experience.

The principles of Democracy are as follows

1. Government by consent: democracy is government by consent of the people. Rational consent can be obtained by persuasion, for which an atmosphere of free discussion is essential. Consent is obtained at two levels. A) Among the representatives of the people in the legislative assemblies where members of the opposition have their full say, and B) At a public level where there is a direct communication between the leadership and the people.



2. Public Accountability: It essentially means the representatives must remain answerable to the people. As we have seen earlier that democracy essentially is based on public consent; therefore, it is implied that the government should be responsible and responsive to the people. Whatever the will and aspirations of the people are, the government should attempt to fulfil/realise those if they fall well within the constitutional framework of the country.

3. Majority Rule: In modern representative democracies, decisions are taken in several bodies right from electing the government to the committees that are constituted. It is considered to be the heart of the democratic system that all issues in all the bodies, from the legislature to the cabinet, executives, and other committees, are resolved through majority decisions. Political equality is secured by the principle of one man, one vote, which implies that there will be no privileged sections claiming special weightage nor any underprivileged section whose voice is ignored. No discrimination is allowed on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth or ownership of property. The principle of majority rule relies on the wisdom of the majority.

4. Constitutional government and Rule of Law: Constitutional government means government by law rather than by men. Democracy requires an infinitely complex machinery of processes, procedures, and institutions to translate the majority will into action. If one compromises with the law, rampant corruption and decay of democracy are ensured. It is, therefore, essential to have a well-established tradition of law and constitution for the stability of a democratic government.

Dimensions of Democracy: Social Democracy, Economic, and Political

Social Democracy is a political, social, and economic ideology that supports economic and social interventions to promote social justice within the framework of a capitalist economy, as well as a policy regime involving a commitment to representative democracy, measures for income redistribution, and regulation of the economy in the general interest and welfare state provisions. Social democracy thus aims to create the conditions for capitalism to lead to greater democratic, egalitarian, and solidarity outcomes, and is often associated with the set of socioeconomic policies that became prominent in Northern and Western Europe. In India, Dr. B.R Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, strongly advocated for Social Democracy.

Core values of Social Democracy are as follows.

1. Freedom, Equality, and Fraternity: This was the battle cry of the French Revolution, and these broadly remain the core values of democratic parties today. The formulation of core values began in the nineteenth century with the rise of the bourgeoisie, and they began to conquer the world at the latest. By the mid-twentieth century, they came to be the standard by which states and societies were judged.

2. This is also reflected in the legal foundations of the United Nations. With the UN's two Human Rights Covenants of 1966, the fundamental civic, political, economic, social, and cultural rights attained the apex of their legitimacy and have been ratified by almost every country in the world. They constitute something like a global legal foundation. Fundamental rights are supposed to ensure the transposition of core values into formal legal claims.

3. Fundamental Rights: These are the rights enshrined in the constitutions of democratic countries. These are claims that individuals have in a state. In India, Fundamental Rights are enshrined in Part



III of the Constitution. If the fundamental rights are abridged by any individual or the state, any citizen can move the Supreme Court or the High Courts. Economic democracy or stakeholder democracy is a socioeconomic philosophy that proposes to shift decision-making power from corporate managers and corporate shareholders to a larger group of public stakeholders that includes workers, customers, suppliers, neighbours, and the broader public. No single definition or approach encompasses economic democracy, but most proponents claim that modern property relations externalize costs, subordinate the general well-being to private profit, and deny the polity a democratic voice in economic policy decisions. In addition to these moral concerns, economic democracy makes practical claims, such as that it can compensate for capitalism's inherent effective demand gap.

Political Democracy is a means for the people to choose their leaders and to hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office. The people decide who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national and local levels. They do so by choosing between competing parties in regular, free, and fair elections. Government is based on the consent of the governed. In a democracy, the people are sovereign; they are the highest form of political authority. Power flows from the people to the leaders of government, who hold power only temporarily. Political Democracy is a means for the people to choose their leaders and to hold their leaders accountable for their policies and their conduct in office. The people decide who will represent them in parliament, and who will head the government at the national and local levels. They do so by choosing between competing parties in regular, free, and fair elections. Government is based on the consent of the governed. In a democracy, the people are sovereign; they are the highest form of political authority. Power flows from the people to the leaders of government, who hold power only temporarily. Challenges before Democracy: the basic challenges before democracy in India are poverty, illiteracy, lower participation, criminalization of politics, political violence, corruption, communalism, and Regionalism.

Women, after family, patriarchy exists most in politics. Women are always considered to be secondary citizens of the country. Hence, the opportunities for participation are minimal for them. In most cases, they do not even have the right to select their own candidates and are often forced to vote for a candidate whom the head of the family (generally male) asks them to. If at all women come out to vote during various elections, from parliamentary to state legislature to the local bodies of Municipal corporations, municipal councils, the zillaparishads, to panchayat samities to the gram panchayat, the turnout is generally very low. As regards contesting elections, women, though a 33% reservation is available, very few women volunteer for the same. As the posts are reserved for the political families, or the male members of the family operate from behind the curtain.

The government machinery cannot the entire time attempt to bring them to the main time. Hence, community initiatives are most needed in this sphere. These marginalised groups are not even registered voters, and hence a large number of people are out of the fray of the election and, in turn, the democratic process. It is therefore imperative to bring these people into the political sphere of the country.

Political and institutional shifts

- **End of single-party dominance:** The era of dominance by the Indian National Congress has ended, leading to a multiparty system with a greater emphasis on regional and caste-based parties.



- **Rise of coalition governments:** Stable, single-party governments have given way to coalition governments that rely on regional parties.
- **More prominent state governments:** State governments and their chief ministers are becoming more politically and economically influential.
- **Central government as regulator:** The central government's role is shifting from direct intervention to regulation, with institutions like the Supreme Court and the Election Commission becoming more visible and effective.
- **Transformation of the party system:** The party system has become more representative of India's social structures, with greater representation for rural and backward castes, although this has also led to a decline in the functioning of legislative institutions.

The dimensions of democracy are social, economic, and political, which are interconnected and crucial for a functioning democratic society. The social dimension includes social inclusion, equality, and human rights, like freedom of expression and assembly. The economic dimension focuses on equitable distribution of wealth and resources, access to necessities like healthcare and education, and fair labor practices. The political dimension involves electoral processes, political equality, and the government's accountability to its citizens.

Social dimension

- **Inclusion and equality:** Ensures equal rights for all citizens regardless of race, gender, religion, or socioeconomic status.
- **Human rights:** Protects freedoms of expression, assembly, and privacy.
- **Social justice:** Addresses inequality and oppression by providing universally accessible public services like education and healthcare.
- **Inclusivity:** Strives to include marginalized groups and ensure their representation in political processes.

Economic dimension

- **Distribution of wealth:** Aims to minimize economic disparities and ensure fair distribution of resources.
- **Access to necessities:** Guarantees that all citizens have access to essential services like healthcare, education, and fair economic opportunities.
- **Fair labor:** Protects workers' rights and promotes fair labor practices, preventing economic exploitation.
- **Social welfare:** Involves policies that support public welfare and provide a social safety net.

Political dimension

- **Elections and participation:** Include regular, fair elections and the right to participate in decision-making processes.



- **Political equality:** Ensures that all citizens have an equal say in politics, with institutions like the right to vote and free speech.
- **Accountability:** Holds the government accountable to the people.
- **Rights and freedoms:** Uphold constitutional rights and the rule of law, protecting individuals and minorities from the majority.
- **21st-century party politics,**

corruption India has been seen political corruption for decades. Democratic institutions soon became federally owned, dissent was eliminated, and a majority of citizens paid the price. The political corruption in India is weakening its democracy and has led to the erosion of trust by the general public in the political system. A good amount of money is required in elections, which is a source of the political-capitalist nexus. Pre-election alliances are common in India, with parties deciding to share seats. This is seen mainly on a state-by-state basis rather than on the national level. Candidate selection starts after seat sharing has been agreed upon by alliance fellows. Indian political parties have a low level of internal party democracy, and therefore, in Indian elections, both at the state and national levels, party candidates are typically selected by the party elites, more commonly called the party high command. The party elites use a number of criteria for selecting candidates. These include the ability.

Of the candidates to finance their own election, their educational attainment, and the level of organization they have in their respective constituencies. Quite often, the last criterion is associated with candidate criminality. Panchayati Raj Institutions or Local self-government bodies play a crucial role in Indian politics, as they focus on grassroot-level administration in India. On 24 April 1993, the Constitutional (73rd Amendment) Act, 1992 came into force to provide constitutional status to the Panchayati Raj institutions. This Act was extended to Panchayats in the tribal areas of eight States, namely Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan, from 24 December 1996. The Act aims to provide 3-tier system of Panchayati Raj for all States having population of over 2 million, to hold Panchayat elections regularly every 5 years, to provide reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Women, to appoint State Finance Commission to make recommendations as regards the financial powers of the Panchayats and to constitute District Planning Committee to prepare draft development plan for the district. As with any other democracy, political parties represent different sections of Indian society and regions, and their core values play a major role in the politics of India. Both the executive branch and the legislative branch of the government are run by the representatives of the political parties who have been elected through the elections. Through the electoral process, the people of India choose which representative and which political party should run the government. Through elections, any party may gain a simple majority in the lower house. Coalitions are formed by the political parties in case no single party gains a simple majority in the lower house. Unless a party or a coalition has a majority in the lower house, a government cannot be formed by that party or the coalition. Current ruling parties in the states and union territories of India

BJP (12)

- Coalition with BJP (6)
- INC (4)
- Coalition with INC (2)



Cover Page



- Other parties
- (AAP, AITC, BJD, CPI(M), TRS and YSRCP) (6)
- President's rule (1)
- No legislature (5)

India has a multi-party system, where there are several national as well as regional parties. A regional party may gain a majority and rule a particular state. If a party is represented in more than 4 states, it would be labelled a national party (subject to other criteria above). Out of the 72 years of India's independence, India has been ruled by the Indian National Congress (INC) for 53 years as of January 2013.

The party enjoyed a parliamentary majority save for two brief periods during the 1970s and late 1980s. This rule was interrupted between 1977 and 1980, when the Janata Party coalition won the election owing to public discontent with the controversial state of emergency declared by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. The Janata Dal won elections in 1989, but its government managed to hold on to power for only two years. Between 1996 and 1998, there was a period of political flux with the government being formed first by the nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), followed by a left-leaning United Front coalition. In 1998, the BJP formed the National Democratic Alliance with smaller regional parties and became the first non-INC and coalition government to complete a full five-year term. The 2004 Indian elections saw the INC winning the largest number of seats to form a government, leading the United Progressive Alliance, and supported by left parties and those opposed to the BJP. On 22 May 2004, Manmohan Singh was appointed the Prime Minister of India following the victory of the INC and the Left Front in the 2004 Lok Sabha election. The UPA ruled India without the support of the Left Front. Previously, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had taken office in October 1999 after a general election in which a BJP-led coalition of 13 parties called the National Democratic Alliance emerged with a majority. In May 2013, Narendra Modi of the BJP was elected as Prime Minister of India. Formation of coalition governments reflects the transition in Indian politics away from the national parties toward smaller, more narrowly based regional parties. Some regional parties, especially in South India, are deeply aligned to the ideologies of the region, unlike the national parties, and thus the relationship between the central government and the state government in various states has not always been free of rancour. Disparity between the ideologies of the political parties ruling the centre and the state leads to severely skewed allocation of resources between the states.

Conclusion

The Indian democracy contains lessons for the study of Indian politics, but also for the study of democratic politics more generally. India is the world's largest democracy, and Indians constitute about half of the people who live in what Freedom House defines as 'free' societies. This collection reveals how 'actually existing democracy' is practiced, which may give advocates of democracy reasons to despair. The contributors illustrate how growing political participation has been accompanied by a decline in intra-party democracy, and how identities and ideologies have sometimes dissuaded extremist parties from gravitating towards the centre of the political spectrum. But it is also true that India regularly holds elections, losers leave positions of power with the promise that they can try again in the next election, and more leaders from underprivileged groups have ascended to power. Understandably, observers of Indian politics may be disappointed with what they see, but their disappointment points out the great unrealized potential of democracy in India. This collection sheds light on the slow but steady progress that Indian political parties have made towards realizing the potential of crafting democracy in India.



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CROPPING INTENSITY AND IRRIGATION SOURCES: A CASE STUDY OF TELANGANA

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Abstract:

The present study examines the sources of irrigation that influence the cropping intensity and its applicability over the years under different agricultural technological regimes in Telangana over the sample period 1999 to 2015. It is observed that irrigation intensity through wells is increasing at an increasing rate, whereas the irrigation intensity through the tanks is decreasing at an increasing rate over the sample period. Irrigation intensity through the canal is fluctuating depending upon the monsoon rainfall level, but on the whole, it also exhibits a decreasing trend over the sample period. It can be concluded that wherever there is a possibility to dig new wells, the farmers tried and, in most cases, they succeeded, and thereby irrigation intensity increased over the time period.

Keywords: *Cropping intensity; irrigation, tanks, canal, and wells*

Introduction

There are only two ways to satisfy the increasing food and other demands of the country's rising population—either expanding the net area under cultivation or intensifying cropping over the existing area. The net sown area of the country has risen by about 20 per cent since independence and has reached a point where it is not possible to make any appreciable increase. Thus, raising the cropping intensity is the only viable option left.

Agriculture plays a vital role in India's economy. 54.6% of the population is engaged in agriculture and allied activities (census 2011), and it contributes 17% to the country's Gross Value Added (current price 2015-16, 2011-12 series). As per the land use statistics 2013-14, the total geographical area of the country is 328.7 million hectares, of which 141.4 million hectares is the reported net sown area and 200.9 million hectares is the gross cropped area with a cropping intensity of 142 %. The net sown area works out to be 43% of the total geographical area. The net irrigated area is 68.2 million hectares.

Cropping intensity refers to the raising of several crops from the same field during one agricultural year; it can be expressed through a formula

Cropping Intensity = Gross Cropped Area / Net Sown Area x 100

Thus, higher cropping intensity means that a higher portion of the net area is being cropped more than once during one agricultural year. This also implies higher productivity per unit of arable land during one agricultural year. For instance, suppose a farmer owns 5 hectares of land, and gets the crop from these five acres during the kharif season and, again, during the rabi season, he raises a crop from 3 hectares. He gets the effective production from 8 hectares, although he owns only 5 hectares physically. Had he raised crops on 5 hectares in total, his cropping intensity would have been 100 per cent or 100, while now it is 160 per cent or 160. The cropping intensity shows great spatial variation



in India, with higher levels in the northern plains. Lower levels are found in dry, rain-fed regions of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Karnataka.

Measures to Raise Cropping Intensity:

Various measures to raise cropping intensity are discussed below:

1. **Irrigation:** Irrigation has played an important role in raising the cropping intensity in northern states, where it has risen considerably. Irrigation helps raise the cropping intensity by enabling the raising of crops during the dry season.
2. **Fertilizers:** The need to leave the land fallow for some period to regain the lost nutrients can be dispensed with by using fertilisers and following some other suitable cropping practices.
3. **Crop Rotation:** It is a suitable arrangement of successive crops in such a way that the different crops draw nutrients in different proportions or from different strata. For instance, if legumes (pulses, gram, etc.) or certain oilseeds are sown just before the cereals, they fix the atmospheric nitrogen in the soil, which can be absorbed by the cereals.
4. **Mixed Cropping:** This works on similar principles. In this case, wheat and barley or wheat and gram or barley and gram are grown together to maintain a balance of consumption between different nutrients.
5. **Relay Cropping:** This means simultaneous sowing of different crops with different nurturing periods in the same field and harvesting them one after the other. For instance, highly fertilizer-intensive crops like sugarcane and tobacco can be followed by cereals, in order to utilize the residual nutrients.
6. **Selective Mechanization:** Use of tractors, tillers, threshers, etc., can save critical time between raising two crops, thus enabling the sowing of more than one crop.
7. **Use of Fast-Maturing Varieties:** These varieties can enable the growing of more than one crop within one growing season.
8. **Appropriate Plant:** Protection: These measures include the use of pesticides and insecticides, seed treatment, weed control, rodent control measures, etc. These measures are effective when all the farmers in an area take them up collectively.

Objectives of the Study

The present study aims to:

1. Examine the trends in irrigation intensity from different sources (canals, tanks, and wells) in Telangana during 1999-2015
2. Analyze the relationship between irrigation sources and cropping intensity



3. Understand the changing pattern of irrigation sources and their impact on agricultural productivity
4. Provide policy recommendations for sustainable irrigation management

Data and Methodology

The study is based on secondary data collected from the Directorate of Economics and Statistics, Government of Telangana, and various agricultural statistics reports. The data covers the period from 1999-2000 to 2014-15, spanning 16 years. The analysis includes both gross and net irrigation data from three major sources: canals, tanks, and wells.

The methodology employed includes:

- Trend analysis to understand the temporal changes in irrigation patterns
- Correlation analysis to examine the relationship between irrigation sources and cropping intensity
- Graphical representation to visualize the trends and patterns

Data and analysis

Table 1: Source-wise gross and net irrigation.

| Gross Irrigation under (Lakh Ha) | | | | | Net Irrigation under (Lakh Ha) | | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|------|-------|-------|--------------------------------|------|-------|-------|
| Year | Canal | Tank | Wells | Total | Canal | Tank | Wells | Total |
| 1999-00 | 3.5 | 2.7 | 13.8 | 20.8 | 2.8 | 2.3 | 10.0 | 15.7 |
| 2000-01 | 3.8 | 3.1 | 14.8 | 22.4 | 3.0 | 2.7 | 10.5 | 16.8 |
| 2001-02 | 3.1 | 2.3 | 14.3 | 20.3 | 2.5 | 1.9 | 10.3 | 15.2 |
| 2002-03 | 1.7 | 1.7 | 12.6 | 16.3 | 1.5 | 1.5 | 9.3 | 12.7 |
| 2003-04 | 1.7 | 2.2 | 13.2 | 17.6 | 1.4 | 1.9 | 9.4 | 13.1 |
| 2004-05 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 13.3 | 16.6 | 1.2 | 1.3 | 10.0 | 12.8 |
| 2005-06 | 4.2 | 3.2 | 15.4 | 23.5 | 2.6 | 2.5 | 11.0 | 16.7 |
| 2006-07 | 4.2 | 2.9 | 16.4 | 24.1 | 2.8 | 2.3 | 11.5 | 17.1 |
| 2007-08 | 3.4 | 2.1 | 18.2 | 24.5 | 2.2 | 1.6 | 13.1 | 17.5 |
| 2008-09 | 3.7 | 2.9 | 19.8 | 27.2 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 13.1 | 18.8 |
| 2009-10 | 1.7 | 0.7 | 18.4 | 21.3 | 1.4 | 0.6 | 12.6 | 14.9 |
| 2010-11 | 5.0 | 3.1 | 21.1 | 30.0 | 3.2 | 2.4 | 14.0 | 20.0 |
| 2011-12 | 4.3 | 2.1 | 21.6 | 28.6 | 3.3 | 1.8 | 14.2 | 19.8 |
| 2012-13 | 1.2 | 1.8 | 22.1 | 25.6 | 0.9 | 1.6 | 14.9 | 17.7 |
| 2013-14 | 4.7 | 2.8 | 23.4 | 31.6 | 2.9 | 2.3 | 17.1 | 22.9 |
| 2014-15 | 2.4 | 1.1 | 21.2 | 25.3 | 1.7 | 1.0 | 14.1 | 17.3 |

Figure 1: Source-wise gross and net irrigation in Telangana.



Cover Page



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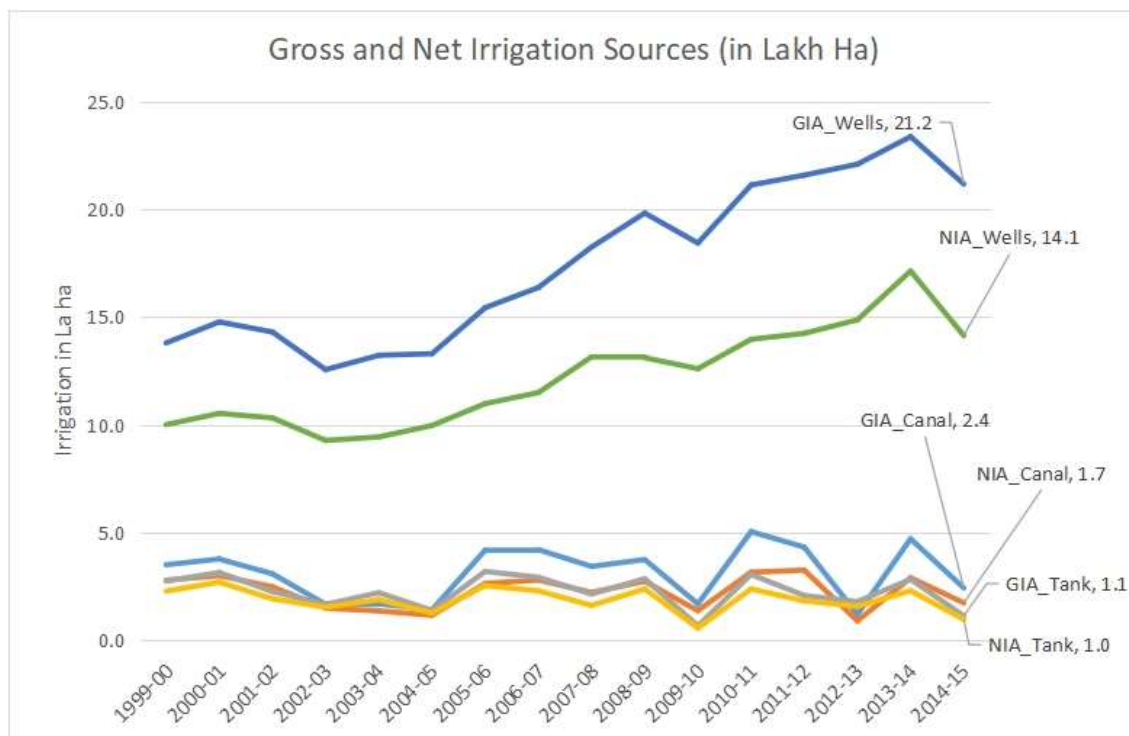
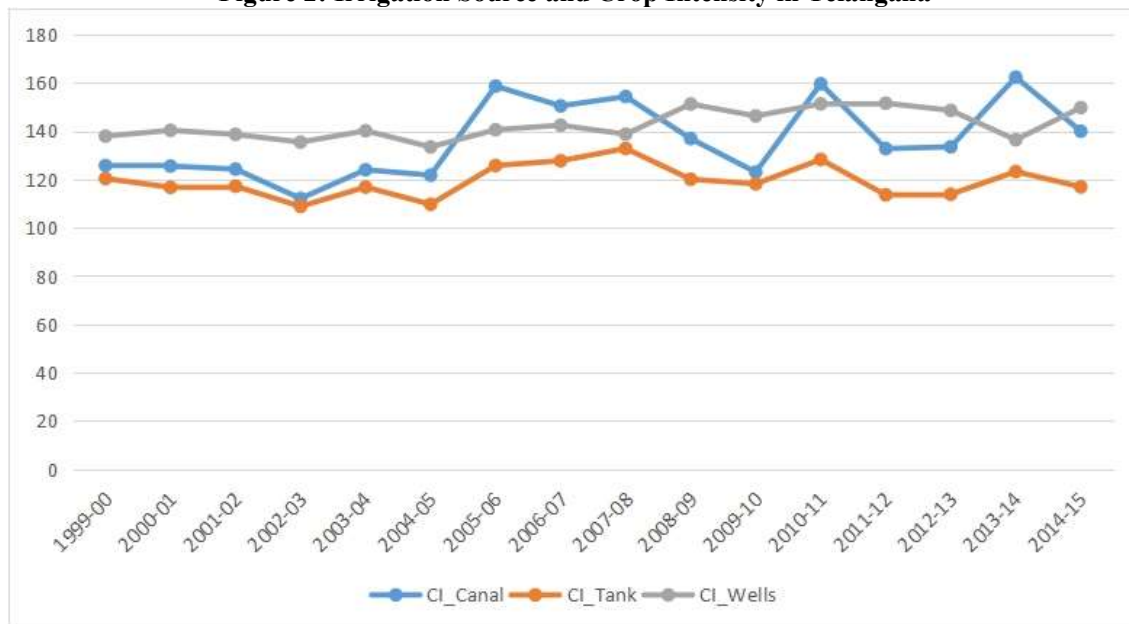


Figure 2: Irrigation Source and Crop Intensity in Telangana





Analysis and Results

Trends in Irrigation Sources

The data analysis reveals distinct patterns in the utilization of different irrigation sources over the study period:

1. Well Irrigation

Well irrigation shows a consistent upward trend throughout the sample period. The gross irrigated area through wells increased from 13.8 lakh hectares in 1999-2000 to 21.2 lakh hectares in 2014-15, representing a growth of approximately 54%. The net irrigated area through wells also increased from 10.0 lakh hectares to 14.1 lakh hectares during the same period, showing a 41% increase. This increasing trend can be attributed to:

- Individual farmer investments in borewells and tube wells
- Availability of electricity for pumping
- Greater control over irrigation timing and water application
- Government subsidies for well construction and pump sets

2. Tank Irrigation

Tank irrigation exhibits a declining trend over the study period. Gross irrigated area through tanks decreased from 2.7 lakh hectares in 1999-2000 to 1.1 lakh hectares in 2014-15, a decline of approximately 59%. The decline in tank irrigation can be attributed to:

- Encroachment of tank beds and catchment areas
- Siltation and reduced storage capacity
- Lack of proper maintenance and desilting operations
- Erratic rainfall patterns affecting tank filling
- Shift in farmer preference towards more reliable sources

3. Canal Irrigation

Canal irrigation shows high fluctuation depending on monsoon conditions and reservoir storage levels. The gross irrigated area through canals ranged from a low of 1.2 lakh hectares (2012-13) to a high of 5.0 lakh hectares (2010-11). The overall trend shows a slight decline with high variability. Factors affecting canal irrigation include:

- Dependency on monsoon rainfall for reservoir storage
- Inter-state water disputes affecting water availability
- Aging canal infrastructure and seepage losses
- Tail-end water scarcity in canal systems

Relationship Between Irrigation Sources and Cropping Intensity

The empirical results show that there is a positive relationship between the cropping intensity and sources of irrigation, except in the case of other wells. The findings indicate:

1. **Tanks and Cropping Intensity:** Despite the declining trend in tank irrigation area, there exists a very high positive relationship between cropping intensity and tanks as a source of irrigation. This can be explained by the fact that in areas where tanks are still functional, they provide assured irrigation for multiple cropping seasons, particularly supporting rabi crops after monsoon-fed kharif crops.
2. **Canals and Cropping Intensity:** Canals show the second-highest positive relationship with cropping intensity. Canal irrigation, when available, provides relatively assured water supply for multiple crops. The completion of major irrigation projects and improved water distribution systems in canal-commanded areas have contributed to higher cropping intensity.
3. **Tube Wells and Cropping Intensity:** Tube wells also demonstrate a positive relationship with cropping intensity, though less pronounced than tanks and canals. The flexibility and



Cover Page



timeliness of irrigation through tube wells enable farmers to take up multiple crops, though the relationship is moderated by groundwater depletion concerns and energy costs.

4. **Other Wells and Cropping Intensity:** The negative relationship between cropping intensity and other wells (open wells, dug wells) can be attributed to their declining water availability, dependence on groundwater recharge, and limited capacity to support intensive cropping patterns. Many such wells have become defunct due to declining water tables.

Discussion

Shift from Surface to Groundwater Irrigation

The data clearly indicate a significant shift from traditional surface water irrigation sources (tanks and canals) to groundwater-based irrigation (wells). This transition reflects:

1. **Individual Control:** Farmers prefer groundwater sources as they provide greater autonomy over irrigation scheduling, independent of government distribution systems or community management.
2. **Reliability Concerns:** The decreasing reliability of traditional sources, particularly tanks, has pushed farmers towards private investments in borewells.
3. **Technological Accessibility:** Improved drilling technology and the availability of submersible pumps have made groundwater exploitation more accessible to small and marginal farmers.
4. **Economic Incentives:** Subsidized electricity for agriculture has reduced the operational costs of pumping groundwater, making it economically attractive despite high initial investment costs.

Sustainability Concerns

While the shift to groundwater irrigation has enabled higher cropping intensity and agricultural productivity in the short term, it raises several sustainability concerns:

1. **Groundwater Depletion:** The rapid increase in well irrigation has led to overexploitation of aquifers, resulting in declining water tables across Telangana. Reports indicate annual groundwater level declines of 0.5 to 2 meters in many districts.
2. **Water Quality Deterioration:** Intensive groundwater pumping has led to quality issues, including increased fluoride and nitrate concentrations in many areas.
3. **Energy Implications:** The increasing dependence on pumped irrigation has escalated energy consumption in agriculture, straining the state's power sector.
4. **Equity Issues:** The shift to well irrigation has created disparities between farmers who can afford borewells and those who cannot, particularly affecting small and marginal farmers in hard rock areas.

Declining Traditional Irrigation Systems

The decline of tank and canal irrigation represents a loss of sustainable water management systems:

1. **Tanks:** These traditional water harvesting structures provided multiple ecosystem services beyond irrigation, including groundwater recharge, flood control, and biodiversity support. Their decline represents a loss of community-based water management traditions.
2. **Canals:** Underutilization of canal systems indicates inefficiencies in water distribution, maintenance issues, and institutional weaknesses in water user associations.

Policy Implications and Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following policy measures are recommended:

1. Revival of Traditional Irrigation Systems

Tank Restoration:

- Implement comprehensive tank desilting and restoration programs
- Protect tank catchment areas from encroachment through strict enforcement



- Establish community-based tank management committees with adequate financial powers
- Integrate tanks into watershed management programs

Canal System Improvement:

- Modernize canal infrastructure with lining and improved distribution systems
- Strengthen water user associations for equitable water distribution
- Implement canal automation and real-time water management systems
- Resolve inter-state water disputes through cooperative frameworks

2. Sustainable Groundwater Management

Regulation and Monitoring:

- Implement groundwater withdrawal permits based on aquifer capacity
- Establish dense network of piezometers for real-time monitoring
- Declare critical and over-exploited blocks with restrictions on new well permissions
- Mandate groundwater impact assessments for industrial and urban developments

Recharge Enhancement:

- Promote rainwater harvesting structures in urban and rural areas
- Implement check dams and percolation tanks in watersheds
- Encourage farmers to adopt recharge practices like farm ponds
- Link well permissions to mandatory recharge structure construction

3. Demand Management

Crop Pattern Adjustment:

- Discourage water-intensive crops in groundwater-stressed areas through pricing mechanisms
- Promote millets, pulses, and other drought-resistant crops through procurement guarantees
- Develop drought-resistant varieties of commercial crops
- Incentivize crop diversification away from paddy in water-scarce regions

Irrigation Efficiency:

- Subsidize micro-irrigation systems (drip and sprinkler) for water-intensive crops
- Provide technical training on efficient irrigation scheduling
- Promote laser land leveling for improved water distribution
- Encourage direct seeded rice instead of transplanting to reduce water consumption

4. Integrated Water Resources Management

Basin-Level Planning:

- Adopt river basin as the unit of water planning and management
- Coordinate surface water and groundwater management
- Integrate quantity and quality considerations in water allocation
- Establish basin-level regulatory authorities with adequate powers

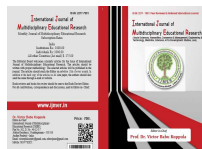
Climate Adaptation:

- Develop climate-resilient irrigation infrastructure
- Create water budgets considering climate change scenarios
- Establish contingency plans for drought and flood situations
- Promote climate-smart agricultural practices

5. Institutional Reforms

Strengthening Water Institutions:

- Empower water user associations with financial and administrative autonomy
- Create farmer-led groundwater governance institutions at appropriate scales
- Establish transparent water accounting and auditing systems
- Integrate traditional knowledge with modern water management practices



Cover Page



Capacity Building:

- Train farmers in water-efficient agricultural practices
- Develop extension services focused on irrigation management
- Build capacity of local institutions for water resource management
- Promote farmer-to-farmer learning through demonstration plots

6. Economic Instruments

Pricing and Incentives:

- Rationalize electricity pricing for agriculture to reflect true costs while protecting small farmers
- Provide incentives for adopting water-saving technologies
- Implement payments for ecosystem services to communities maintaining tanks and watersheds
- Develop crop insurance products linked to water availability

Investment in Infrastructure:

- Increase public investment in irrigation infrastructure maintenance
- Promote public-private partnerships for irrigation modernization
- Establish dedicated funds for tank and canal restoration
- Support farmer collectives in creating shared irrigation infrastructure

Conclusion

The study reveals significant transformations in irrigation patterns in Telangana during 1999-2015, characterized by the increasing dominance of well irrigation and the decline of traditional surface water sources. While well irrigation has enabled farmers to achieve higher cropping intensity and productivity, this shift poses serious sustainability challenges related to groundwater depletion, energy consumption, and equity.

The positive relationship between all irrigation sources and cropping intensity underscores the critical role of assured irrigation in agricultural intensification. However, the particularly strong relationship observed with tank irrigation, despite its declining area, suggests that revival of traditional systems could yield significant benefits for both productivity and sustainability.

The declining trend in tank irrigation represents not just a loss of irrigated area but also the deterioration of integrated water management systems that provided multiple benefits to rural communities. Similarly, the underutilization of canal systems indicates systemic inefficiencies that need urgent attention.

Moving forward, Telangana's water and agricultural policies must balance the need for productivity enhancement with long-term resource sustainability. This requires a multi-pronged approach encompassing revival of traditional systems, sustainable groundwater management, demand-side interventions, and institutional reforms. The transition from the current unsustainable trajectory to a more balanced irrigation system will require strong political will, adequate financial investments, and active participation of farming communities.

The findings emphasize that increasing cropping intensity cannot be achieved sustainably through continued exploitation of groundwater alone. A return to integrated water resources management, combining surface and groundwater sources with efficient use technologies, offers the most promising path forward. Policymakers must recognize that water security is fundamental to agricultural prosperity and food security, requiring long-term vision beyond short-term political considerations.

Limitations of the Study

1. The study is limited to the period 1999-2015 and does not capture more recent developments
2. Quality aspects of irrigation water are not considered
3. Economic costs and returns of different irrigation sources are not analyzed



4. Impact of specific government schemes on irrigation trends is not examined in detail
5. Micro-level variations within the state are not captured

Scope for Further Research

1. Detailed economic analysis of different irrigation sources considering investment, operational costs, and returns
2. Groundwater quality assessment and its impact on crop productivity and human health
3. Comparative analysis of energy consumption patterns across different irrigation sources
4. Impact evaluation of specific government programs like Mission Kakatiya on tank irrigation
5. Socio-economic analysis of equity implications of shifting irrigation patterns
6. Climate change impact modeling on different irrigation sources
7. Institutional analysis of water user associations and their effectiveness
8. Technology adoption patterns in irrigation and factors influencing farmer choices

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ROLE AND CHALLENGES OF MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

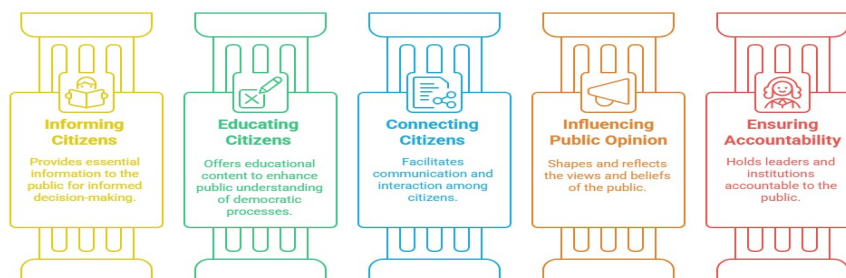
This research article explores the important role that civil society plays in preserving democratic values, institutions, and practices by way of an extensive investigation of secondary data. Emerging as a crucial actor in increasing transparency, responsibility, participatory governance, and inclusive policy-making is civil society, which encompasses non-governmental organizations, community-based associations, media, advocacy groups, and informal citizen collectives. It explores the various mechanisms through which civil society organizations contribute to the vitality and resilience of democratic systems. Drawing on theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, the chapter highlights the significance of civil society in promoting civic engagement, fostering social cohesion, and holding governments accountable. Additionally, it examines the challenges faced by civil society actors and offers recommendations for enhancing their effectiveness in advancing democratic ideals.

Keywords: *Civil society, Responsibility, Media.*

Introduction

Civil society occupies a central position in the tapestry of democratic governance, serving as a vibrant arena for citizen engagement, advocacy, and collective action. Rooted in the principles of voluntarism and civic association, civil society encompasses a diverse array of non-governmental organizations, community groups, and grassroots movements that play instrumental roles in shaping political processes and advancing democratic ideals. At its core, civil society embodies the aspirations of citizens to actively participate in public affairs, hold governments accountable, and foster social cohesion within pluralistic societies.

The Media's Vital Role in Shaping Democratic Societies



The media plays an essential role in modern democracies. It informs, educates, and connects citizens. In a democratic system, the media have various functions that support the principles of freedom,

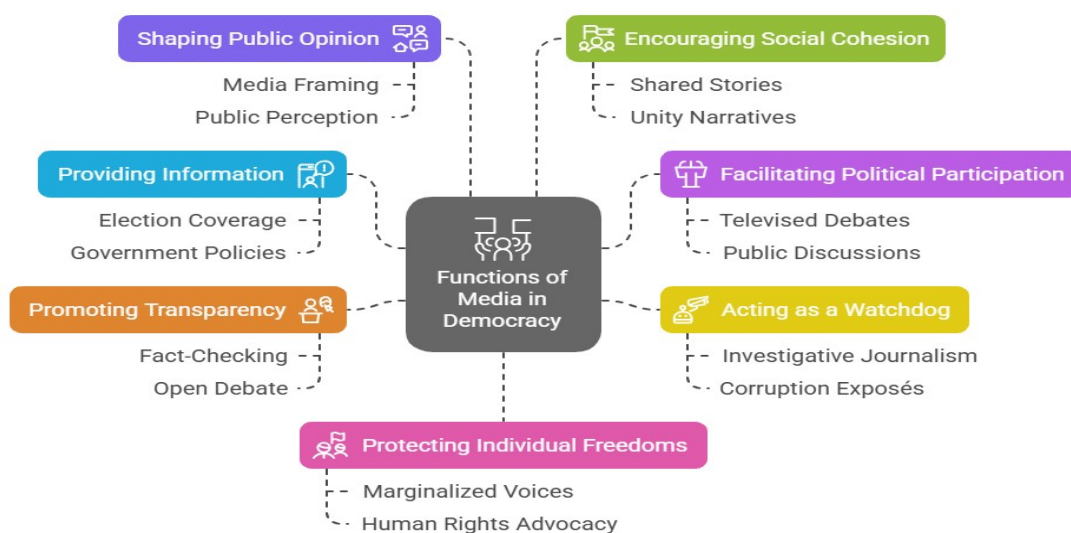


equality, and justice. Understanding these functions is crucial for grasping the relationship between media and democracy.

This article will dive into the core functions of the media in a democracy, exploring how it influences public opinion, accountability, and political participation.

The media plays a vital role in a democracy by informing the public, promoting political participation, ensuring government accountability, and protecting individual rights. It shapes public opinion, fosters social cohesion, and ensures transparency, supporting democratic values and citizen engagement.

Functions of Media in Democracy



1. Providing Information to the Public

One of the most important functions of the media in a democracy is to provide accurate and timely information to the public. Citizens need to make informed decisions, particularly when it comes to voting and engaging in political discourse. Without a well-informed populace, democracy cannot function effectively.

The media serves as the primary source of information on local, national, and international events. It informs citizens about government policies, election campaigns, and significant political and social issues. A free press ensures that people have access to the facts they need to participate in the democratic process.

For example, during election seasons, media outlets are responsible for covering candidates' positions, debates, and voting records. This helps voters make educated choices based on facts, not just hearsay or personal bias.



2. Facilitating Political Participation

The media also serves the function of facilitating political participation. In democratic societies, voting is just one way people can participate in the political process. The media helps citizens engage with political issues by offering platforms for discussion and debate. It allows people to voice their opinions and engage in the public discourse.

Through televised debates, radio shows, podcasts, social media platforms, and news articles, the media provides spaces for citizens to express their political beliefs and concerns. In turn, politicians and governments can listen to these concerns and respond to them. This interaction helps foster democratic dialogue, making sure that citizens feel heard.

A key example of this is how political talk shows and interviews serve as platforms for citizens to discuss public policies and influence political agendas. The feedback from these public discussions often helps shape legislation and public policy.

3. Acting as a Watchdog for Government Accountability

In a democracy, the media also acts as a watchdog. It monitors the actions of government officials, corporations, and other institutions. By investigating corruption, abuses of power, and violations of the public trust, the media holds those in power accountable.

Investigative journalism plays a critical role in this function. Stories that expose corruption or illegal activity are often the result of thorough investigations by media organizations. These reports provide transparency, making it harder for powerful entities to act in secret.

For example, in the Watergate scandal, investigative reporting by The Washington Post led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon. This is a prime example of the media acting as a check on political power.

4. Promoting Transparency and Open Debate

Transparency is another vital function of the media in democracy. Media outlets provide citizens with access to important information regarding government activities, decisions, and actions. They give the public the tools to understand how policies are formulated and implemented.

In democratic systems, open debate is encouraged, and the media serves as a platform for discussing diverse viewpoints. Television shows, online articles, and radio programs allow people to express their opinions, fostering healthy debates about various issues. The media ensures that a broad range of perspectives is available to the public, helping them form well-rounded views.

Moreover, the media provides fact-checking and debunking services. In today's age of misinformation, the media's role in fact-checking is more critical than ever. By separating fact from fiction, the media upholds democracy and prevents the spread of harmful lies.

5. Shaping Public Opinion and Values

The media has the power to shape public opinion, often subtly influencing how people perceive issues, candidates, and events. This function is particularly evident during election campaigns.



Through media coverage, the media can shape perceptions of political candidates, policies, and global events.

In a democracy, public opinion plays a critical role in influencing political decisions. Media outlets provide the information that forms the basis of this opinion. The way an issue is presented or framed can have a profound impact on how it is understood by the public.

For instance, news outlets may emphasize certain aspects of a story, shaping the narrative in a way that influences public perception. This can play a significant role in shaping social norms and values within society.

6. Encouraging Social Cohesion and National Identity

The media also plays a role in encouraging social cohesion and fostering a sense of national identity. It brings people together by telling stories that connect them to their shared history, values, and culture. In a democracy, social cohesion is important because it ensures that citizens work together to solve common challenges.

Through media channels, people learn about national events, historical milestones, and collective achievements. The media often highlights stories of unity, perseverance, and hope that inspire citizens to participate in building a better society. It can also help bridge gaps between different demographic groups by promoting mutual understanding and respect.

7. Protecting Individual Freedoms and Rights

The media plays an essential role in protecting individual freedoms and human rights. It serves as a platform for those whose voices are often marginalized, ensuring that their rights are upheld. Media outlets highlight issues such as inequality, racial injustice, and human rights violations, drawing attention to systemic problems that need to be addressed.

By amplifying the voices of vulnerable communities, the media ensures that these groups are not silenced. This function of the media helps protect the civil rights of citizens, ensuring they are not overlooked in political or societal discussions. In democratic societies, the protection of individual rights is foundational. The media, by advocating for human rights and fairness, helps maintain these freedoms for all.

Final Thoughts

The media serves a multitude of vital functions in a democracy. It informs the public, facilitates political participation, promotes transparency, and holds those in power accountable. Through its various roles, the media ensures that democracy thrives, enabling citizens to engage with political processes, protect their rights, and participate in open debates.

By acting as a bridge between the government and the public, the media supports the democratic values of freedom, equality, and justice. As society continues to evolve, the media will undoubtedly continue to play a crucial role in shaping democratic governance and promoting a more informed and engaged citizenry.



Recommendations for Enhancing Effectiveness:

In order to bolster the effectiveness of civil society in advancing democratic governance, concerted efforts are needed to address key challenges and capitalize on emerging opportunities. The following recommendations offer pathways for enhancing the impact and resilience of civil society organizations (CSOs) in promoting democracy and social justice:

Strengthening Legal Protections: Governments should enact and enforce laws that protect the freedom of association, assembly, and expression, ensuring that civil society can operate independently and without fear of reprisal. Legal frameworks should facilitate rather than hinder the activities of CSOs, providing safeguards against harassment, censorship, and arbitrary restrictions on civic freedoms.

Promoting Civic Education and Awareness: Investment in civic education programs and initiatives is essential for cultivating an informed and engaged citizenry capable of participating effectively in democratic governance. Governments, educational institutions, and civil society should collaborate to develop curricula and resources that promote political literacy, critical thinking, and active citizenship from an early age.

Enhancing Institutional Capacity: CSOs should invest in building their institutional capacity, including governance structures, financial management systems, and strategic planning processes. Capacity building initiatives can help CSOs become more resilient, accountable, and effective in advancing their missions and promoting democratic values.

Fostering Collaboration and Coalition-Building: Civil society organizations should prioritize collaboration and coalition-building efforts to amplify their impact and leverage collective strengths. Strategic alliances with like-minded actors, including other CSOs, grassroots movements, and social justice advocates, can enhance advocacy efforts and mobilize broader support for democratic reform.

Harnessing Technology for Advocacy: CSOs should embrace technological innovations as tools for mobilization, advocacy, and networking. Social media platforms, online advocacy campaigns, and digital organizing tools can enhance CSOs' outreach, engagement, and visibility, enabling them to reach broader audiences and mobilize support for democratic initiatives.

Promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Civil society should prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion within its own ranks, ensuring that marginalized voices and perspectives are represented and amplified. CSOs should adopt inclusive practices and policies that promote diversity and empower marginalized communities to participate fully in decision-making processes.

Building International Solidarity and Support: International actors, including governments, intergovernmental organizations, and civil society networks, should provide sustained support and solidarity to civil society actors facing repression and adversity. Funding, advocacy support, and diplomatic pressure can bolster the resilience and capacity of civil society to withstand authoritarian pressures and promote democratic governance.

Conclusion

The relationship between media and democracy is central to the functioning of any modern political system. As the fourth pillar of democracy, the media plays a vital role in informing citizens, fostering



dialogue, and holding power to account. A healthy democracy requires not only free and independent media but also a pluralistic media environment that represents diverse voices, perspectives, and interests. However, this ideal is increasingly challenged by political pressures, corporate interests, technological disruptions, and social polarization. In recent decades, media bias, misinformation, and ideological echo chambers have eroded public trust in traditional journalism. The rise of partisan reporting and corporate-controlled narratives has, in many cases, weakened the media's ability to serve the public good. Simultaneously, the digital revolution has created a new public sphere that is both empowering and chaotic. Social media platforms enable citizen participation and real-time activism but also facilitate the rapid spread of disinformation, hate speech, and surveillance. Despite these challenges, the media continues to be an indispensable tool for democratic engagement and social mobilization. It has supported transformative social movements, exposed injustice, and amplified marginalized voices. The key lies in reinforcing ethical journalism, enhancing media literacy among citizens, and developing fair regulatory mechanisms that protect both freedom of expression and democratic integrity. Going forward, the future of democracy will depend not just on elections or institutions but on the quality and inclusivity of the public discourse that the media helps shape. A democratic media must remain accountable, independent, transparent, and committed to truth. Strengthening media systems is not merely a professional or academic task—it is a civic responsibility in the ongoing project of democratic renewal.

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33 YEARS JOURNEY OF THE 73RD CONSTITUTION AMENDMENT ACT

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Abstract:

In the world of today, local government is an integral part of the four-tier system of government. At the apex is the supranational agency, like the United Nations, which is purely voluntary in character and which lays down a code of conduct and behaviour in regard to relations between sovereign rights. The second tier comprises individual national governments functioning in accordance with their national borders. The constituent units, which are called states or provinces, are from the third tier. The fourth and bottom tier is the local government, which is created by national and state enactments and functions within a limited jurisdiction as provided by various statutes. The local government's jurisdiction is limited to a specific area, and its functions relate to the provision of civic amenities to the population living within its jurisdiction. It has no legislative powers. Its powers to raise finances are defined, and hence they are restricted. A local government functions within the provisions of the statute that created it. It is subordinate to the state or provisional government, which exercises control and supervision over it.

KEYWORDS: *Local government, Four-tier system, Enactments, Jurisdiction, Statutes, Constitution, Amendment, Eleventh Schedule, Poverty Alleviation, Community, GramSabha, State Election Commission.*

Introduction:

In India, local government is widely known as local self-government. This term originated when the country was under British administration and did not enjoy self-government either at the central or state levels. When a decision was taken by the British Government to associate Indians in administering local affairs, it meant a slice of self-government for the people. But today, the term self-government is used both at the central and state levels. In fact, in the Indian constitution, the term used is local government. Further, as there is Entry 4 in List III (state list) of the seventh schedule reads: "Local government, that is to say, the constitution and powers of municipal corporations, improvement trusts, district boards, mining settlement authorities and other local authorities for local self-government or village administration."

Role of local government

When people begin to live together in a locality, certain problems arise from communal living. These problems relate to the provision of civic amenities like the supply of water, removal of rubbish, drainage, lighting, prevention of epidemics, health facilities, roads, etc. As the population increases and the locality grows, more problems like regulation of trade and commerce, dangerous and unhealthy occupations, facilities for education, public health, etc., arise and become more intense. Man's conception of minimum amenities for acceptable living conditions undergoes change with the advances of science and technology. Thus, the functions to be performed by a local government continue to increase. Existing facilities have to be enlarged; new ones have to be taken up; and the



Cover Page



performance of various functions has to be continuously improved. In other words, all these amenities that make living better physically, economically, socially, and culturally constitute the responsibility of local government.

Some of these tasks are of a general nature, being common both in their focus and in degree of intensity to other communities living elsewhere, and the benefits affected by them cannot be assigned to any one community. These have, therefore, to be planned, programmed, and executed on a regional or even national basis and are the direct concern of the government at the state and national levels. But the activities of the local government are no less numerous.

Indeed, there has been an impressive increase in the functions of local government. Local government has been undertaking new activities which either regulate the conduct of the citizens or are like services, such as, provision of mass transport, construction of houses for the poor, supply of electricity, health centres, parks, playgrounds, etc. In fact, local government is today much more important in the daily life of a citizen than the state or central government. What is more, the functions are likely to continually increase in the future. William A. Robson rightly remarks:

“Local authorities have greater opportunities today than ever before. If the powers of the central government are increasing, so are the powers of the local councils”.

At present, Panchayati Raj Institutions in India are constituted on the basis of the Constitution (Seventy Third Amendment) Act,1992. Normally, all the states in India (expecting those whose population is less than 20 lakhs) provide a three-tier system in the rural areas. The nomenclature, however, could differ from state to state. These relate to

1. Village Panchayats.
2. Panchayat Samithi (Mandal Parishads) and
3. Zilla Parishads.

The Legislative Assemblies of the concerned states formulate legislation for maintaining and regulating these representative bodies. The state executive authorities see that these institutions carry on their activities on proper lines. They supervise the affairs, programmes, and activities of these bodies with a view to decentralizing political power to reach the benefits to the ordinary people.

Constitution(73rdAmendment) Act1992

The R.S. Sarkaria Commission Centre State relations prescribed uniform legislation for the effective working of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in India. Accordingly, the union government headed by the Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi set up a parliamentary sub-committee under the chairmanship of P.K. Thungan in 1988. The sub-committee was asked to suggest ideal administrative and political machinery for formulating the district plans. It prescribed a Constitutional status to the Panchayat Raj Institutions. It viewed Zilla Parishad as the sole agency of planning and development in the district. But its proposals were not implemented due to the change in the Union Government in 1989. Two years later, the Union government, headed by Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, strongly felt the need for the immediate grant of constitutional status to the Panchayat Raj Institutions. It introduced a Bill to that effect in the Parliament in September 1991. Later, the bill was referred to a joint select committee, which studied the former and submitted its report in July 1992. The bill was



accepted by the Parliament, and the same was referred to the state legislatures for their approval. As the majority of state legislative assemblies accepted the Bill, it became an Act in the name of the Constitution (Seventy Third Amendment) Act, 1992. The Act came into force on April 24, 1993.

The Act reinserted Part IX, which was deleted by the Constitution (Seventh Amendment) Act, 1956, and added a new Schedule, namely the 11th Schedule. The Act deals with Articles 243 to 243 (O) of the Indian Constitution.

Salient features

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 has the following salient features:

- a. The Act defined clearly certain terms like District, Gram Sabha, Panchayat, Village etc.,
- b. It constituted a Gram Sabha for every village, which acts as the legislative body at the village level.
- c. It made it obligatory for every state to implement three tier system of Panchayat Raj, i.e., Panchayat at the Village, intermediate, and district levels.
- d. It insisted that every state legislature make laws for the composition of the Panchayat on a uniform basis. It further specified direct elections to the Panchayat based on territorial constituencies. It provides the right to vote to the chairpersons of the Panchayat and other members, whether directly elected or not.
- e. It provided reservation in every Panchayat for Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes in proportion to their population to the total Population in the Panchayat area, and women not less than $\frac{1}{3}^{\text{rd}}$ of the total seats (Andhra Pradesh Government enhanced the Women Reservation upto 50%).
- f. It specified the duration of Panchayat as five years, and instead of holding elections before the expiration of the term or in case of dissolution, within six months
- g. It prescribed the eligibility and disqualifications of the candidates in local government elections.
- h. It provided for the creation of a Finance Commission for local bodies.
- i. It provided for auditing the accounts of the Panchayats by the state account and audit officers.
- j. It also provided for the State Election Commission to conduct elections to the local bodies.
- k. It stated that union territories shall follow the directives of the President of India constituting or abolishing of areas.
- l. It mentioned some exemptions to the states having administrative councils in scheduled areas.
- m. It provided for special Tribunals for solving election disputes.

Eleventh Schedule

It contains the following 29 fundamental subjects enumerated with the preview of Panchayats:

1. Agriculture, including agricultural extension.
2. Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation, and soil conservation.



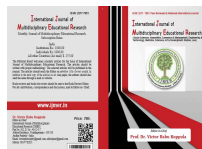
3. Minor irrigation, water management, and watershed development.
4. Animal husbandry, dairying, and poultry.
5. Fisheries.
6. Social forestry and farm forestry.
7. Minor forest produce.
8. Small-scale industries, including food-processing industries.
9. Khadi, village, and cottage industries.
10. Rural Housing
11. Drinking Water
12. Fuel and fodder.
13. Roads, culverts, bridges, ferries, waterways, and other means of communication.
14. Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity.
15. Non-conventional energy sources.
16. Poverty alleviation programme.
17. Education, including primary and secondary schools.
18. Technical training and vocational education.
19. Adult and non-formal education.
20. Libraries.
21. Cultural activities.
22. Markets and fairs.
23. Health and sanitation, including hospitals, primary health centres, and dispensaries.
24. Family welfare.
25. Women and child development.
26. Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded.
27. Welfare of the weaker sections, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
28. Public distribution system.
29. Maintenance of community assets.

Significance of the 73rd Amendment

The constitution 73rd Amendment implements the Article 40 of the Directive principles of state policy which says that states shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government and have upgraded them from non-justiciable to justifiable part of the constitution and has put constitutional obligation upon states to enact the Panchayat Raj Acts as per provisions of the part IX.

Conclusions

The positive impact of the 73rd Amendment in Rural India is clearly visible, as it has changed power equations significantly. Elections to the panchayats in most states are being held regularly. Through over 600 District panchayats, around 6000 Intermediate panchayats, and 2.3 lakh Gram panchayats, more than 28 lakh persons now have a formal position in our Representative Democracy. On the other hand, this bill lacks the proper definition of the role of the bureaucracy. It does not clearly define the role of the state government on a practical level; people in India are illiterate, and they are actually not aware of these novel features. The panchayats are dominated by effluents in some parts of the country. The 3 tiers of the Panchayati Raj still have very limited Financial powers, and their viability is entirely dependent upon the political will of the states. Even after the lapse of 30 years, 29 fundamental subjects enumerated within the purview of the panchayats are not enforced by the



Cover Page



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panchayats. The state governments are establishing parallel Institutions, such as the District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) couple of years back, the government of Andhra Pradesh established Gram Sachivalayas and Ward Sachivalayas under the pretext of taking the government to the doorstep of the people. Periodical elections are not being conducted within a stipulated time. All these factors have weakened the spirit of grassroots democracy and progress of the little Republics.

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THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

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Abstract:

Democracy becomes strong only when citizens remain fully informed, socially responsible, and actively engaged in public life. Media together with civil society are vital institutions that uphold these principles by expanding access to information, encouraging public dialogue, promoting accountability, and ensuring protection of human rights. This article examines how media and civil society contribute to democratic consolidation through transparency, community participation, social justice advocacy, and protection of civil liberties. Challenges such as misinformation, censorship pressures, and shrinking civic spaces are analyzed along with strategies to safeguard independence. The findings highlight that democracy flourishes when both institutions operate freely, ethically, and collaboratively for public welfare.

Introduction:

Democracy is built on the core belief that power lies in the hands of the people. Citizens require information, awareness, freedom to express ideas, and equal opportunity to participate in decision-making. The media serves as a window to public affairs by delivering timely information that shapes opinions and encourages participation in governance. Civil society strengthens democratic culture by representing communities, promoting social rights, and ensuring that government policies respond to public needs. Together, they help transform individuals into active democratic stakeholders who question injustice, defend freedoms, and support inclusive growth. Strong democracies, therefore, rely on strong media and strong civil society.

Media as the Voice of Democracy:

The media protects democratic culture by providing reliable information that supports informed decision-making. Citizens judge policies better when the media reveals both achievements and failures within public administration. Investigative journalism exposes corruption, misuse of authority, and exploitation. Public debates encourage rational thought across diverse viewpoints. The media serves as a guardian of public interest through election coverage, fact-driven political reporting, and constant monitoring of those in power. It provides space for local issues to gain national attention. Digital media further widens participation by allowing common citizens to share experiences and concerns with immediate visibility.



Cover Page



Civil Society as the Defender of People's Rights:

Civil society organizations safeguard fundamental freedoms and human dignity. Their work in education, health, environmental protection, gender equality, disability rights, and poverty reduction expands democratic access for marginalized communities. They demand accountability from decision makers whenever policies fail to support citizens. They mobilize volunteers, represent those without influence, and give strength to public voices that would otherwise remain unheard. Their advocacy leads to legislative reforms and policy corrections that deepen democracy.

Joint Role in Public Accountability:

Democracy becomes hollow when power is not checked. The media questions the actions of those in authority, while civil society organizes collective pressure to implement reforms. Both work together for transparency under tools such as Right to Information, public interest litigation, social audits, and fact-based campaigns. Participation in these processes increases trust between the government and the people. Accountability ensures that democracy remains a system guided by responsibility rather than control.

Digital Democracy and Youth Engagement:

Technological innovation creates new democratic opportunities. Social media platforms encourage large-scale citizen movements for justice. Youth participation becomes more visible in online campaigns that demand equality, climate protection, women's security, and honesty in leadership. Young citizens use digital literacy to verify information, challenge misinformation, participate in civic discussions, and uphold democratic values with courage.

Protection of Civil Liberties:

Free expression gives people the confidence to question injustice. Media supports this by creating safe spaces for conversation. Civil society promotes legal protections for freedom of speech and the safety of journalists. These rights are protected in democratic constitutions, including Article 19 in India, which allows citizens to speak without fear. Democratic strength depends on how well these freedoms remain protected.

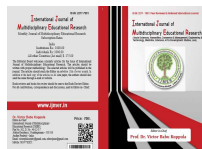
Challenges in the Democratic System:

Several obstacles restrict the positive influence of these institutions.

- Misinformation harms public unity.
- Political pressure influences journalistic freedom.
- Excessive commercial influence reduces focus on public issues,
- Restrictive laws weaken activism
- Threats against journalists and rights defenders reduce courage
- Low media literacy creates confusion among citizens
- These issues must be addressed with strong ethics, education, and accountability measures.

Strategies for Strengthening Democracy:

- Promote independent journalism through legal protection



Cover Page



- Encourage transparency within media ownership
- Provide supportive policies for civil society work
- Expand digital literacy to fight misinformation
- Foster collaborative platforms between government, media, and civil society
- Support youth leadership for long-term democratic resilience
- When these strategies are adopted, democratic values flourish with long-lasting strength.

Conclusion:

Media and civil society together shape the spirit of democracy by empowering people, defending freedoms, and ensuring accountability. Their influence encourages equality, justice, and human development. Democracy becomes stronger when every voice gains respect, when information remains truthful, and when those in power stay responsible to the public. Protecting the freedom and independence of media and civil society is essential for ensuring that democracy continues to serve humanity with fairness and dignity. An informed society will always protect its democracy with confidence and courage.

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INDIA @2047: REALIZING THE VISION OF A DEVELOPED, EQUITABLE, AND SUSTAINABLE REPUBLIC

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Abstract

India's journey toward 2047, the centenary of its independence, marks a defining moment in the nation's socio-economic transformation. The vision of a developed, equitable, and sustainable republic encapsulates the aspirations of its citizens. This paper explores pathways to achieving this vision through sustainable development, social justice, technological innovation, and environmental stewardship. It highlights the crucial roles of governance, education, gender equality, and digital transformation, providing a comprehensive roadmap towards India's emergence as a global leader.

Keywords: *India @2047, Sustainable Development, Equity, Governance, Innovation, Environmental Sustainability, Inclusive Growth*

Introduction

India @2047 envisions a nation that is economically strong, socially just, and environmentally sustainable. The centenary of independence is an opportunity to reflect on progress and chart a roadmap for inclusive growth, innovation, and equitable resource distribution. India's rapid economic growth, demographic dividend, and technological capabilities provide a strong foundation for this transformation.

However, challenges such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and environmental degradation remain significant barriers. A balanced development model is essential to ensure that progress reaches every section of society. This paper discusses economic, social, technological, and environmental dimensions of India's vision for 2047.

Economic Transformation and Development

Economic growth is central to India's vision. Industrial modernization, entrepreneurship, and a thriving service sector are key drivers. Initiatives such as Make in India, Startup India, and Digital foster innovation and employment.

Agricultural modernization ensures rural prosperity, reduces poverty, and strengthens food security. Infrastructure development, efficient logistics, and public-private partnerships further facilitate sustained growth. By aligning economic policies with social welfare and environmental concerns, India can achieve a resilient and inclusive economy.

The service sector, including IT, healthcare, and tourism, is crucial for job creation and global



competitiveness. Strategic investment in education, research, and innovation will enhance India's technological edge, positioning the nation as a knowledge economy.

Social Equity and Inclusive Growth

Inclusive growth requires quality education, skill development, gender equality, and universal healthcare. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to transform India's education system, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and employability. Women's empowerment through education, entrepreneurship, and representation strengthens social equity. Expanding healthcare access and social protection ensures well-being, enhancing productivity and societal stability. Policies targeting marginalized communities help bridge economic and social disparities, fostering an inclusive society. Furthermore, promoting vocational training and skill development equips the youth for the modern workforce, while social programs ensure equitable distribution of resources and opportunities across regions.

Governance and Democratic Reforms

Transparent, accountable, and participatory governance is vital. E-governance initiatives improve efficiency and citizen engagement. Strengthening local governance through Panchayati Raj and Urban Local Bodies ensures decentralized decision-making. Anticorruption measures, digital platforms, and citizen centric services enhance accountability. Good governance underpins sustainable development, ensuring that policies are effectively implemented and benefits reach all citizens. Effective governance also involves institutional reforms, policy continuity, and leveraging technology to monitor development indicators, reducing bureaucratic inefficiency, and fostering public trust.

Environmental Sustainability and Green Growth

Sustainable development integrates economic growth with environmental stewardship. Renewable energy adoption, green technology, afforestation, and climate resilience strategies are essential for long-term sustainability. Policies promoting a circular economy, water conservation, and biodiversity preservation ensure ecological balance. Integrating environmental considerations into urban planning, industry, and agriculture mitigates climate risks and promotes a healthier ecosystem for future generations. India's commitment to international agreements on climate change, including the Paris Agreement, reflects the nation's responsibility toward global sustainability. Green innovation and citizen awareness campaigns further support environmental objectives.

Technological Revolution and Digital India

Technological advancement drives productivity, innovation, and inclusive services. Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), blockchain, and biotechnology revolutionize sectors such as healthcare, education, and governance. Bridging the digital divide between urban and rural India ensures equitable access. Smart cities, digital governance, and technology-enabled solutions enhance efficiency, transparency, and quality of life for citizens, accelerating India's growth toward a developed nation.

Additionally, investment in research and development, high speed internet connectivity, and cyber-security measures are essential for maintaining India's global technological competitiveness.



Cover Page



Cultural and Ethical Dimensions

India's civilizational values of tolerance, harmony, ethics, and social responsibility provide a foundation for sustainable development. Balancing modern scientific advancement with ethical principles ensures holistic growth. Cultural education, preservation of heritage, and promotion of inclusive values strengthen national identity while fostering societal cohesion. Ethical leadership in the public and private sectors further enhances trust and collaboration in nation-building.

Challenges and the Way Forward

Despite progress, challenges such as income disparity, urban-rural divide, unemployment, environmental degradation, and governance inefficiencies persist. Addressing these challenges requires strategic investments, policy reforms, and collaborative efforts across government, the private sector, and civil society. Innovative solutions, capacity building, and international partnerships support sustainable and inclusive development, ensuring India's preparedness for the global future. Fostering research, promoting entrepreneurship, and empowering local communities are essential to achieving India's vision.

Conclusion

India @2047 represents the aspiration of a developed, equitable, and sustainable republic. By integrating economic growth, social justice, technological innovation, and environmental stewardship, India can emerge as a global leader by 2047. Realizing this vision requires visionary leadership, citizen engagement, and ethical governance. Through collective effort, strategic planning, and commitment to sustainability, India can achieve a future that embodies prosperity, inclusivity, and resilience for all citizens.

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REMOTE VOTING-A KEY REFORM: ANALYSIS (A STUDY ON ELECTORAL REFORMS IN INDIA)

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Abstract

Missing the franchise right after 77 years of independence is a significant lapse in Indian democracy. A new voting method for domestic migrants has been studied by the Indian Election Commission. Under this system, voting is not required to be done in the voter's home State or district. The RVMs, also known as remote electronic voting machines, will be used in this voting process. A voter who is registered in a constituency will be able to exercise their right to vote from a single machine, thanks to the new RVM prototype. This gives an opportunity to encourage migrants to cast ballots from their workplace.

The Election Commission was directed by the Supreme Court (SC) to investigate the low turnout, which was deemed a serious lapse. The need to accommodate the migrants who were previously living outside the state has now arisen before the Election Commission. This initiative will encourage and guarantee that more eligible voters who don't vote early will exercise their right to vote. The choice to let domestic migrants vote has been praised by several parties. Targeting 100% votes will undoubtedly change the game for the coming elections. The low voting turnout percentage has many different causes that need attention. Given the new technology, political parties have to agree in principle to this method and reach consensus. This paper analyzes the possibility and its difficulties through India's remote voting method.

Key Words – Remote EVM, Remote Voting, Low Turnout, Migrant Workers

Introduction:

The election system of the largest democracy in the world has benefited greatly from technology, the development of EVMs, VVPAT devices- Vigil App, etc. The remote voting option has been proposed by the Election Commission before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. For domestic migrant voters, the Election Commission (EC) has created a prototype of a remote electronic voting machine (RVM). For many years, EC has been thinking about this continuing topic. It has gained attention because the Indian Election Commission suggested a new voting mechanism for domestic migrants. In December 2023, the EC declared that it had prepared to test out remote voting for domestic migrants. Voter turnout will increase as a result of allowing voters to cast ballots from far-off regions. The RVMs are also known as remote electronic voting machines. For this sort of voting, a multi-voter remote polling station will be set up. The voter will virtually have the same experience with the RVM stand-alone non-network system as they do with the EVMs currently in use. Remote voting refers to all those means which allow electors to vote from locations other than the polling station assigned to their district of residence, either from another state or from within the country.

According to the Election Commission, these RVMs can manage up to 72 constituencies at once from a single remote polling location. For a remote voting facility, the voter must register either online or offline. A voter who is registered in multiple constituencies will be able to exercise their voting rights



from a single machine with the help of the new RVM prototype. The concerned Returning Officer of their home constituency must be contacted within a time frame that has been previously announced. A multi-constituency remote polling station will be established at the voter's current location once their eligibility for remote voting has been confirmed and marked. The security system and voting process for the RVMs will be identical to those of the electronic voting machines. The Commission has invited all Recognized 08 National and 57 State Political Parties on **16.1.2023** to demonstrate the functioning of the multi-constituency prototype Remote EVM. This modified form of EVM can handle up to 72 multiple constituencies from a single remote polling booth.

These RVMs have been modified such that an electronic ballot of the candidates' list and symbols is shown in place of a fixed ballot paper sheet. The voter's respective constituency and candidate list will appear on the RVM display when they scan their constituency card in front of the presiding officer at the station. The automated technology will count and record the votes for each candidate in a constituency as well as overall. In the 2019 Lok Sabha Elections, India adopted the Electronically Transmitted Postal Ballot System (ETPBS). The ETPBS helped the armed forces, central paramilitary forces, and central government officers working in Indian missions abroad to cast their vote.

The remote voting system is Block chain-based distributed system developed to enable migrants and other in-service voters posted at different locations to cast their votes from their place of work (Host Constituency) without commuting to their Parent constituencies, thereby saving time and money, and enabling higher voter turnout. A Proof of Concept (PoC) was developed as per the directions of the Election Commission of India and demonstrated. The system enables secure storage of details of remote votes, ballots, and encrypted votes in the blockchain. The returning officer of the parent Constituency only would be authorized to download all encrypted votes from the blockchain on the day of counting and decrypt the same to count the votes.² There are some countries, such as Estonia, France, Panama, Pakistan, Armenia, etc, which practice remote voting for the citizens living abroad or away from their respective constituencies.

Significance of the Study:

Every person over the age of 18 has the right to vote by Article 326 of the Indian Constitution, which is known as universal adult franchise. For a variety of reasons, a sizable portion of migrant voters do not show up at the polls to cast their ballots. A major step in the right direction for the largest democracy in the world will be the establishment of RVF. The action is an admirable initiative designed to boost voter participation in the developed democracy. The common voter can cast their ballot from any polling site in the nation with this voting system, eliminating the need to travel back to their hometown. The requirement to vote solely at the polling place where you reside will be eliminated by the new idea.

The existence of remote EVMs can permanently resolve the problem of migrant employees often changing dwellings, being reluctant to get their names registered at their places of employment. The general election turnout in 2019 was 67.4% in 542 seats. According to the data that is now available, 30 core eligible voters are not participating in the election, the EC reported, owing to internal migration. In the Lok Sabha election, about one-third of eligible voters were unable to cast their vote. Low turnout was mostly caused by a sizable portion of the migrant community not voting. The electoral process will include "on-the-go" people, including students, patients, migratory workers, vital service providers, etc.



RVM gives more flexibility to migrants and enables to cast his /her vote. An individual can cast his/her vote from multiple locations and not solely from one registered polling station. This will give a voice to unheard groups like migrant workers in the world's largest democracy. The contesting candidates generally did not concern themselves with them, as they will not vote in elections. Thus, it will help in fulfilling the ambition of the representative democracy, as no voter is left behind. This move will ensure a larger number of eligible voters cast their vote and further strengthen democracy. Thus, it will help in fulfilling the ambition of the representative democracy. The spirit of this article calls for ensuring universal voter turnout in elections, and RVM can help us move closer towards this.

Aims of the Study

- To increase general voter turnout in an electoral democracy,
- To increase voter turnout and ensure that immigrants participate in elections

Challenges:

Similar Difficulties to EVMs: The voting process and security mechanism of the Multi-Constituency RVM for migrant voters will be identical to those of the EVM. This basically implies that the RVMs will continue to face the same difficulties as the existing EVMs. The Representation of the People's Act of 1950 and 1951, the Conduct of Election Rules of 1961, and the Registration of Electors Rules of 1960 must all be modified to allow for remote voting.

Voter Portability and Residency: Managing voter portability while upholding the legal definitions of "ordinary residence" and "temporary absence" is a societal difficulty. It will also be required to tackle the territorial constituency idea of remote voting and define remoteness as an outside constituency, district, or state. The main task for the government is to define migrants. Because they are all domestic voters, local identity is a concern. Engaging the local government is also a tricky task for this purpose. There is a lot of misunderstanding surrounding this issue; thus, a wider debate is necessary to strengthen democracy. As voter education is a difficult task, the EC has to plan to demonstrate remote voting methods. The legal system must redefine "migrant voter" and decide whether or not they are still registered at their original residence. There is no central database on internal migrants, and it is unclear how to identify a particular pocket. Experts are pointing out that voter identification is a major problem because it is impossible to define domestic migrants in a certain location due to the diverse polling methods.

Voting Secrecy and Administrative Difficulties: Maintaining the integrity and confidentiality of the voting process is crucial, but it can be difficult to ensure voting secrecy in remote areas. For a secure and equitable remote voting system, it is essential to put procedures in place to reliably identify voters and stop impersonation. The pilot phase has currently become more inclusive. It is very difficult to choose agents to oversee the voting process; whether a particular voter is genuine is a crucial issue when it comes to voter identification, along with the naming of migrant workers.

There are administrative and logistical difficulties in setting up polling places and providing efficient oversight of distant voting locations. The confidentiality of the voting process may be compromised because the RVM facility will be operated in front of an authorized officer. Application of the Model Code of Conduct, ensuring vote confidentiality, security, and secrecy, are some of the issues that need



to be paid attention to. Facilities for poll workers to identify voters, conduct remote voting procedures, and counting of votes have to focus. Political parties and candidates are now calling into question the validity of EVMs in an effort to increase public faith and political parties. To dispel any suspicions about how tamper-proof RVM would be is a difficult task. Costing to cast a ballot without disclosing his identify is crucial because voting is confidential. Problems with voter acceptance can be resolved.

Technological Challenges: To avoid voter misunderstanding and lapse, it is crucial to ensure that voters are comfortable with the technologies and interfaces used for remote voting. One technological concern that needs to be resolved is the establishment of effective methods for precisely tallying votes cast via remote voting. There have been cases where an elector's current address differs from where they were registered on the electoral rolls due to factors such as occupation, education, medical care, or other factors. The Election Commission has to resolve a few operational & technical concerns. Because RVM is built on a blockchain, it needs a lot of effort to prevent hacker attacks that would tilt the results. The procedure entails storing a user's facial and biometric information. The right to privacy would be compromised because it is a new technology built on the block chain, and any misuse of it by concerned authorities or hackers. In terms of technological aspects, this will guarantee that it cannot be hacked.

Strategy Used Moving Forward

Political parties and civil society organizations will need to make further efforts to see this process through, trusting in the integrity and transparency of the remote voting procedure. Allow all interested parties to visit and verify that it is temper-free. As part of the democracy experiment, parties and candidates were informed in advance that RVM would be required. Real-time information can help people have more faith and confidence in the political process. Verify that the security system used by the Remote EVMs is the same as the one used by the EVMs. To increase public trust in safe, secure, transference, and voter pool-proof technology, the Election Commission should host RVM hackathons. Creating awareness is important for securing more engagement. Insofar as RVM is concerned, the commission must be explicit about transfers and the need to maintain secrecy.

This issue needs to be addressed from a variety of angles and with an eye towards voting turnout. This laudable intention allows for both offline and online registration of migrants. An important issue that has to be addressed is the voters' incapacity to cast ballots as a result of internal migration. This innovation would increase voter turnout and make the world's largest democracy considerably more inclusive by ensuring that migrants participate in elections. The new mechanism makes calling the relocation a foolproof process. The pertinent laws should be changed, and the matter should be fully discussed in Parliament.

Conclusion:

According to this system, the RVM would boost turnout at the upcoming Lok Sabha election in 2029. The building of the necessary infrastructure for remote voting is just one of several steps that must be taken because this is a novel idea. As a result, voting remotely should be secure, reliable, and transparent. If implemented properly, migrant voters wouldn't have to go back to their home district or town to cast their ballots.



Given the increased voter participation in the election process, this reform will be a major step forward in increasing the voter turnout. It is a positive move that evolved into a worthwhile effort for a good cause. Mock trials are required for the process of using remote voting machines. When additional information is required to implement the procedure on a practical level, remote voting may be an option. To obtain the voters' support, if the exercise is on the correct track, it must demonstrate complete trust. To make elections more inclusive, the EC has chosen to adopt this approach as an experiment. Learn about the difficulties of voting with RVM and what else can be done. As a more extensive reform and new voting system, it necessitates discussion in order to examine its effects on Indian politics.

The ECI is well known around the world for its flawless record of holding free and fair elections on such a large scale. Voting IDs, EVMs, and other modern electoral processes in India have been made achievable by the ECI. Remote voting machines, or RVMs, have the potential to be a game-changer in the enfranchisement of migrant voters. But the procedure must be error-free and reliable. Every political party ought to support the process and be persuaded of its honesty and openness. Only after careful consideration and political agreement should it be introduced. The idea of allowing migrants to vote is considered a laudable one.

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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA: PROGRESS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

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Abstract

The global economies have come together in their endeavors to meet the objectives of sustainable development. This represents a stark difference from previous strategies, where governments focused solely on the growth and progress of their own economies. The pursuit of growth and success has led to disparities in economic progress between nations, exhausted certain natural resources, and consequently disrupted the ecological equilibrium. The impact of this is being experienced in the form of global warming and climate change. Since this threatens the very existence of human life on earth, a course of action that would ensure a safe environment for future generations has become the need of the hour. Sustainable development is a term coined to ensure that development takes place in such a way that natural resources are sustained and passed on to future generations unimpaired. This paper tries to understand the challenges encountered by India in achieving Sustainable Development Goals and offers suggestions to overcome them.

Key Words: *Millennium Development Goals (MDG), Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG)*

Introduction

Sustainable Development has become the buzzword of the international community. The struggle for growth and excellence has created an imbalance in the economic development among countries, depleted some of the natural resources, and has thus altered the ecological balance. Since this threatens the very existence of human life on earth, a course of action that would ensure a safe environment for future generations has become the need of the hour. Sustainable development is a term coined to ensure that development takes place in such a way that natural resources are sustained and passed on to future generations unimpaired. Seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aimed to build a more prosperous, more equal, and more secure world by the year 2030 have been developed. They have been adopted by 193 Member States at the UN General Assembly Summit in September 2015 as a part of their agenda for Sustainable Development. India is a signatory to this summit and is strongly committed to the 2030 agenda.

At this juncture, this paper tries to understand the challenges encountered by India in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The paper also tries to suggest measures to overcome the challenges.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which came into effect on 1 January 2016, is an improvement on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) ¹. In India, as far as MDGs are concerned, considerable progress has been made in the field of basic universal education, gender equality in education, and global economic growth. However, there was slow progress in the



improvement of health indicators related to mortality, morbidity, and various environmental factors contributing to poor health conditions ². With SDGs in place, the Indian government is now trying to integrate the efforts taken towards achieving MDGs with SDGs. SDGs are wider in scope. The 17 SDGs are as follows.

Sustainable Development Goals have been built on the universal principle of 'leave no one behind.' As far as India is concerned, the national development goals of India converge well with the SDGs, and India is expected to play a leading role in determining the success of the SDGs globally.

Measures taken for implementing SDGs in India

NITI Aayog, the Government of India's premier think tank, has been entrusted with the task of coordinating the SDGs. States have also been advised to undertake a similar mapping of their schemes, including centrally sponsored schemes.

In addition, the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is engaged in the process of developing national indicators for the SDGs.

Many of the Government's flagship programmes, such as Swachh Bharat, Make in India, Skill India, and Digital India, are at the core of the SDGs. State and local governments play a pivotal role in many of these programmes. State governments are paying keen attention to visioning, planning, budgeting, and developing implementation and monitoring systems for the SDGs.

UN Support for SDG initiatives in India

The United Nations in India supports the participation of civil society organisations, think tanks, and the Indian media in discussions and side sessions at the International Conference on Financing for Development at Addis Ababa and during the General Assembly in New York.

The UN Country Team in India supports NITI Aayog in its efforts to address the interconnectedness of the goals, to ensure that no one is left behind, and to advocate for adequate financing to achieve the SDGs. In close collaboration with NITI Aayog and partners, the UN has supported thematic consultations on the SDGs to bring together various state governments, central ministries, civil society organisations, and academia to deliberate on specific SDGs.

Support to State Governments

The UN in India currently supports five State governments (Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, and Odisha) in localising the SDGs to address key development challenges at the state level.

Challenges in attaining SDGs in India

Defining Indicators

One of the major challenges for India is devising suitable indicators to effectively monitor the progress of SDGs. India's past records reveal that it has not been very successful in setting relevant indicators to measure outcomes. The definition for "safe" drinking water has been misconstrued with the availability of hand pumps and tube wells and the official data suggested that 86% of Indians



had access to safe drinking water and therefore were “on track” for the MDG goal on drinking water. But the number of waterborne diseases and deaths due to diarrhea are quite high in India.

Financing SDGs:

Despite India's best efforts to reduce poverty it has the highest number of people living below international poverty line. As per the World Bank report 2013, 30 per cent of its population was under the \$1.90-a-day poverty measure. According to the United Nations MDG 2014 report, despite high economic growth, in 2010, one-third of the world's 1.2 billion extreme poor lived in India alone. At today's level of investment – public and private in SDG related sectors in developing countries, an average annual funding shortfall over 2015-2030 of some \$2.5 trillion remains. This gap can be bridged only through increased private sector investments, especially in infrastructure, food security and climate change mitigation sectors.

In India, A new study estimates that implementing SDGs in India by 2030 will cost around US\$14.4 billion. Given the recent cut in social sector schemes in India there is likely to be a significant funding gap.

Monitoring and Ownership: A third significant challenge in implementing SDGs would be with respect to ownership. Though NITI Aayog is expected to play the lead role in tracking the progress of SDGs, its members have expressed reservations on being able to take on this mammoth task.

Measuring Progress: The last challenge is how to measure the progress or achievement of SDGs. The Indian government has admitted that non-availability of data (particularly in respect to sub-national levels), periodicity issues and incomplete coverage of administrative data, have made accurate measuring progress of even MDGs virtually impossible.

Measures to overcome Challenges

The challenges discussed above can be overcome by developing an exclusive model for implementing, monitoring, measuring and reporting SDG related course of action. Though India has well established organizations such as the CSO to provide statistical data, many times they are general and do not match specific requirements. Even in the case of MDGs, India was not able to measure its achievement accurately because of a lack of data. Therefore, developing suitable indicators to assess the progress of SDGs and also simultaneously developing a system that can support this exercise by supplying the required data is of paramount importance.

A separate index for measuring the progress or achievement of SDGs can be developed by taking the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) as a base.

Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG)

The Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG) measures the quality of governance in every African country on an annual basis. The IIAG was launched in 2007 and has evolved to be the most comprehensive assessment of African governance. As governance is not measurable directly, IIAG has developed the most suitable set of proxy indicators for the purpose by making use of a variety of data sources and indicators. IIAG does not collect primary data, but rather collates data provided by respected external sources. The IIAG data set is updated every year when practical improvements are



identified, and the results have been made available since 2000. Whenever new historical data are made available or the structure of the IIAG is strengthened, the entire data set is updated back to 2000. The latest 2016 IIAG consists of 95 indicators from 34 data providers.

Techniques used in developing IIAG

Some of the techniques used in developing IIAG are worth noting and may be applied in the Indian context also.

- **Clustered indicators:** Indicators measuring a specific governance concept are sometimes available from multiple sources. To improve the accuracy of the indicator measurement and avoid double-counting, these measures are combined into a single clustered indicator, which is the average of its underlying sub-indicators.
- **Handling missing data.** Most indicators included in the IIAG have missing data points over the time series. As this can have an effect on a country's aggregate scores, estimates are provided for missing data, following a statistical process called imputation. According to this process, if data is missing outside the time series, it is replaced by an existing data point. When data is missing inside the time series, these are replaced with numbers incrementally higher or lower than the neighbouring data points.
- **Normalisation.** Given that the data utilised in the construction of the IIAG comes from 35 separate data providers that present their data on different scales, it is necessary to standardise all data. This is done through a statistical process called normalisation, whereby raw data for each indicator are transformed by the min-max normalisation method. This process allows all scores to be published in common units and within the same bounds of 0-100, where 100 is always the best possible score.
- **Data aggregation** The IIAG uses a transparent, simple, and replicable method of data aggregation. A simple average is calculated using the structure of the Index to arrive at the Overall Governance scores.

All of the above four techniques are ideal and very much applicable to India. The Administrative system in India is highly bureaucratic, with two Governments, one at the centre and the other at the state level. This has resulted in duplication of data. Even the available data has gaps in it and suffers from errors of standardization. All this can be resolved by developing an Indian Index of Sustainable Development (IISD) by following the techniques discussed above. IISD can be developed for a period of 15 years from 2015-30. The data set can be updated every year according to recent developments and revised for all 15 years by following the same pattern of the Ibrahim index. This would ensure the availability of the most recent data set.

Financing SDGs.

The challenge of financing SDGs can be resolved to some extent by strengthening the existing academic infrastructure in the nation. India is a regional hub for higher education and boasts itself for being the home of several renowned institutions such as IIT and IIM. These institutions have well-developed infrastructure for research. These resources can be pooled and effectively utilised in designing, developing, and measuring indicators meant for sustainable development.



In developing countries like India, there was some hesitation in reducing carbon emissions for two reasons: first, their per capita emissions were lower, and second, it would mean compromising with the development of the nation. Therefore, a carbon trading system evolved among the countries of the world, where firms were permitted to emit carbon within the prescribed limit and were assigned carbon credits for this purpose. If any firm wants to exceed the limit, it can buy the unused credit from another firm. In this way, the buying firm is penalized for exceeding its carbon quota, and the selling firm is rewarded for reducing its emissions. Governments can consider the idea of penalizing firms with higher carbon footprints by making them finance the sustainable goal programmes in the developing and least developed countries.

The responsibility of implementing SDGs

With NITI Aayog expressing its doubt as to how far it would succeed in this laborious task, it is high time the Indian Government decentralises this task, and while doing so, it must be borne in mind that SDGs aim at conserving and passing on the natural resources to the next generation. This cannot be done without the involvement of society. But a society so knowledgeable as to use its natural resources in a perfectly ecologically sound manner is nearly impossible. Changing social, political, cultural, technological, and ecological conditions will exert new pressures on the natural resource base, and the possibility of its misuse or overuse always remains. Therefore, a political order in which decision-making will be done by those who would suffer the consequences of those decisions would be ideal. A new system that would ensure participation from groups that are directly connected to the problem needs to be developed.

Conclusion

India is a country with the second-largest population in the world. The steps taken by India for the achievement of SDGs matter a lot to the world. If India succeeds in attaining the SDGs, it would mean a larger section of the world has achieved it. Therefore, India must develop effective methods for implementing, monitoring, and measuring the progress of SDGs. The biggest challenge for India seems to be the development of suitable indicators. This can be handled by developing an Indian Index for Sustainable Development (IISD) by taking the Ibrahim Index as a base

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ROLE OF DIGITAL INDIA PROGRAM IN STRENGTHENING GOOD GOVERNANCE – A STUDY

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Abstract

Digital India Programme is the application of ICT in the processes of government functioning to bring about SMART Government. The Digital India Programme has brought a new revolution in the field of governance. It brought rapid development of digital infrastructure, improved universal access through Information and Communication Technology, and digital empowerment of citizens. It has encouraged wider participation of citizens in public affairs, improved the process of governance, encouraged quick decision-making, and improved delivery of services to citizens, i.e., the hallmark of good governance. It has brought transparency in government operations, downsizing the government workforce, re-engineering of the service systems, performance management, and emphasis on delivery of reliable and quick public services.

Over the last few years, there has been a sudden rise in the online services provided by the municipalities. This allows citizens to access multiple citizen services through a single window, and through a single account instead of having multiple visits to individual websites of local authorities. Thus, digitalization helps in making the availability of municipal services more responsive and transparent.

Lots of changes have been witnessed in the way the WMC was running in the last decades of the passing century. These changes forced the governments towards new techniques and technologies for the good governance agenda. The ICT and Digital India Programme implemented by WMC has improved efficiency, enhanced quality of services, improved overall trust between citizens and WMC, increased accessibility of WMC services, increased transparency in the functioning of Municipal Corporation, reduced the time limit for providing services, enhanced capacities and performances of WMC, increased citizen participation, and reduced corrupt practices.

Keywords: *Digital India Programme, ICT, SMART Government, Transparency*

Introduction

Digitalis is another name given to the application of Information and Communication Technology (ICT). Digital is not limited only to the Internet and Computers but also to mobile phones, artificial intelligence, social networking, blockchain, mobile apps, and much more. In the course of time, there has been a tremendous shift in the way ICT has been used. Its focus has been shifted from simple productivity improvement and automation to making life easier, simpler, and connected. Information and Communication technology has transformed our lives and work across various sectors, industries, and institutions. Digitalization has pervaded all aspects of life. Life is unimaginable without the use of the internet and smartphones. Now we are just one click away from anything. This process of Digitalisation got a big boost during the Covid-19 period because at that time everything was shut down and we were only digitally connected with the world, be it health, shopping, banking, transport, education, work-life, etc.



Cover Page



The Digital India program, launched by the Government of India in 2015, represents a transformative national initiative aimed at leveraging digital technologies to enhance service delivery, citizen engagement, and administrative efficiency. As governance systems evolve in the face of rising public expectations and technological advancements, Digital India has emerged as a cornerstone for strengthening good governance in the world's largest democracy. Rooted in the principles of transparency, accountability, inclusiveness, and efficiency, the program seeks to bridge the digital divide while modernizing government institutions and processes. Through its wide-ranging components—such as digital infrastructure development, improved digital access to services, and digital literacy—Digital India plays a crucial role in reimagining governance for the 21st century.

One of the most significant contributions of the Digital India program is the creation of a robust digital infrastructure. Initiatives such as BharatNet, which aims to provide high-speed broadband connectivity to rural areas, and the expansion of mobile networks across India's vast geography, have brought millions of citizens into the digital mainstream. This connectivity enables easier access to government schemes, information, and services, thereby fostering inclusivity and reducing regional disparities. The development of platforms like Aadhaar, the world's largest biometric identity system, has further streamlined citizen identification, enabling direct benefit transfers (DBT), reducing leakages, and promoting transparency in welfare distribution.

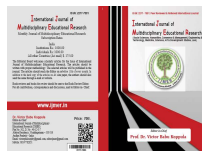
Digital India also contributes to improving service delivery through e-governance platforms that make public services more accessible, efficient, and citizen-centric. Portals such as DigiLocker, e-Sign, UMANG, and the National e-Governance Service Delivery Gateway (NSDG) allow individuals to store documents securely, authenticate identities digitally, and access services from various government departments on a single interface. These initiatives minimize bureaucratic delays, reduce corruption by limiting human intermediaries, and empower citizens to engage with government processes effortlessly. Furthermore, real-time monitoring tools such as dashboards for welfare schemes and digital grievance redressal systems strengthen accountability by allowing authorities to track performance and resolve issues promptly.

Another key dimension of Digital India's impact on good governance is the enhancement of transparency. Open data platforms, digital payments, and online procurement systems like the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) promote fair competition and discourage discretionary practices. Digital financial systems, including UPI and direct benefit transfers, have reduced opportunities for fraud and ensured that public funds reach the intended beneficiaries with greater accuracy.

Digital literacy initiatives under programs such as PMGDISHA (Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan) empower citizens, especially those from underserved communities, to participate effectively in the digital ecosystem. By equipping people with knowledge and skills, the program fosters participatory governance and strengthens democratic engagement.

Review of Literature

Meijer, Lips & Chen (2019) examined the prospects of open governance in an information age. They conceptualized the theoretical perspective of open governance and the nature of the state that has evolved through various stages and leading to open governance. They tried to explore the core elements and socio-technical development with regard to open governance paradigm and highlighted its dynamics by comparing and contrasting open governance with existing governance paradigms



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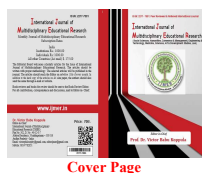
such as public administration, New Public Management, and New Public Governance. It was concluded that the new open governance through its innovative form can solve the complex problem of policy issues which can contribute to existing knowledge.

Salam (2017) considered e-Governance as an effective tool of service delivery in developing countries. He pointed out three main contributions of e-Governance in terms of improving e-administration, e-services, and building e-society. He also attempts to identify the interlink between the factors responsible for effective implementation of e-governance initiatives and ensures good governance like accountability, transparency, responsiveness. Rule of law and participation indicators. It is concluded that the DESC (District E-Service Centres) delivers services to citizens efficiently. It has a positive impact on the citizen's expectations but still, there is a need for improvement in e-governance initiative in order to full fill the good governance promises.

Soni (2016) emphasized on the role of e-governance in transforming India. Among developing countries, India was the earlier adopter of e-governance. With the advent of ICT, users are getting easy access to government services and information. It was considered that the development of any country depends upon the services rendered by the government and their efficient implementation. She identified various challenges which lead to e-governance projects inefficient. She also discussed the need for e-governance in India in order to cope with developed countries. It is concluded that although the majority of e-government projects have been failed to yield the potential benefits despite that India has a number of award-winning e-government projects. Thus, there was a need for awareness among people to utilize the services provided to them for the successful deployment of e-governance projects.

Sood (2016) focused on "the use of information and communication technology for delivering government services to the citizens in an effective manner. In their study, they stressed the empirical examination of the adoption, development, and status of electronic government in Punjab and Nagaland. According to them, the government ministries have adopted online communications as one of the main resources for the delivery of services. A content analysis was conducted on both the government websites to provide data on the current level of information and type of services functionalities available. The objective here was to develop an understanding of the status of e-government by using content analysis data gathered from the content and attributes of government ministry websites as empirical evidence. Through this analysis, the study assessed the possible contribution e-government can make in increasing access to information, improving the delivery of government services, and enhancing government-citizen relations.

Shah (2007) tried to reflect the importance and issues related to e-governance in India. She described the basic structure of e-governance of Layne's four-stage growth model based on technical, organizational, and managerial feasibilities. The objective of the paper is to find out India's position in the e-governance growth model. She highlighted some critical issues that hinder the successful implementation of e-governance. It is concluded that e-governance can be considered both a big challenge and a far bigger opportunity for the efficient implementation of services to all citizens in an effective way. There is also a need for social acceptability and awareness among citizens about e-governance and its initiatives.



Objectives

1. To study the role of the Digital India Program in strengthening good governance in the Warangal Municipal Corporation.
2. To find out the challenges and problems faced by the Warangal Municipal Corporation in the online delivery of services.

Digital India Programme

The government of India is also promoting digitalization. It had launched the "Digital India Programme" on 1st July 2015. It is a flagship programme of the Government of India. Its vision is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. The main vision of this Digital India Programme was to ensure that Government services are available to citizens electronically by improving digital infrastructure, increasing internet connectivity, and digitally empowering the country in the field of technology (Government of India).

Digital India Programme is the application of ICT in the processes of government functioning to bring about –Simple, Moral, Accountable, Responsive, and Transparent (SMART) Government. The Digital India Programme has brought a new revolution in the field of governance. It brought a rapid development of digital infrastructure, improved universal access through Information and Communication Technology, and digital empowerment of citizens. It has encouraged wider participation of citizens in public affairs, improved the process of governance, encouraged quick decision-making, and improved delivery of services to citizens, which are hallmarks of good governance. It has brought transparency in government operations, downsizing the government workforce, re-engineering of the service systems, performance management, and emphasis on delivery of reliable and quick public services.

Pillars of Digital India Programme

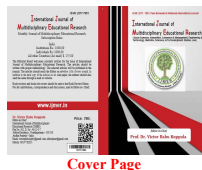
The Digital India Programme plays a pivotal role in the development of the country. It focuses on the development of nine different thrust areas for inclusive development, which leads to strengthening society.

Broadband Highways: Under this, the networks were integrated with cloud infrastructure in order to offer cloud services and high-speed broadband connectivity services. This includes the development of three components of broadband highways, namely National Information Infrastructure, Urban Broadband, and Rural Broadband.

Mobile Connectivity: This includes increasing the penetration of mobile phone networks and establishing a network hub, and providing connectivity to all uncovered rural areas.

Public Internet Access: It encompasses the establishment of at least one common service centre (CSC) in each Gram Panchayat, and the establishment of a Post Office will act as a multi-service centre.

E-Governance: It comprises the development and modification of the governance process in terms of its structure and working procedure, with the development of ICT.



E-Kranti: It is a national e-governance plan with a vision to ensure government services are accessible electronically to citizens through multiple modes. It's a transformation in the delivery process of services.

Information for All: With the development of an open data platform, Information for all types is available to everyone through internet penetration.

Electronic Manufacturing: It stresses the promotion of e-manufacturing in the country.

IT for Jobs: Under this, individuals were trained in IT sectors in towns and villages so that they can earn their livelihood and strengthen society.

Early Harvest Programme: It aims to bring digitalization into traditional platforms of the Government of India.

Relationship between Good Governance and Digital Governance

Good Governance is fundamental in nature, whereas Digital Governance is instrumental. Digital Governance is a tool used for enhancing and strengthening the economy and empowering citizens. No e-Governance initiatives and tools can be effective until some reforms in the functional procedure of government are carried out for their fruitful results. Good Governance dictates the layouts of the plans and shapes digital governance. Digital Governance can be an effective and efficient tool for good governance if and only if some process reforms have been carried out. Simply, making the government processes digitalized can also create some technical and complex problems rather than solving the other institutional problems. With the advent of Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and for effective implementation of the e-Governance plan, the information system should regulate and be capable enough to reach the common man and help the government to provide services to both citizens and other stakeholders with the changing needs and demands of society.

Good Governance refers to an ideal situation where the government manages its affairs and resources in such a manner that meets the needs of society. The advances in Information and Communication Technology brought by the Digital India Programme have transformed the relationship between government and citizens and business in new ways and are leading towards good governance. This Digital India Programme is providing the opportunity to people by involving them in the process of governance at all levels. Better services have been provided to citizens in terms of quality and timelines, thus, it helps in making governance more efficient and effective. Thus, leading it towards good governance.

Digital or Online Services provided by Municipal Corporation

Online Public Grievance Redressal System (PGRS): In this system, citizens can lodge their complaints and grievances with the Municipalities. The citizens, in return, will be provided a unique grievance ID through which they can track the status of their complaint. Municipalities have to redress the complaint within a specific time period.

Online Birth and Death Registration Application: WMC has designed an app for the online registration of births and deaths. The citizens who register through this get a unique registration



number automatically generated by the software. With this unique registration, citizens can track the status of their certificates.

Online RTI Application: In this system, citizens can file online RTI and can demand the required information from the concerned section within a limited time period. The citizens can file RTI after paying the required fees online. After filing RTI, citizens can regularly track the status of their RTI.

Online User Charges: With this app, citizens can pay online the charges for the sanitation and waste dumping services provided by WMC.

Online Pay Rent of Municipal Shop/Flat: By using this service, citizens can pay rent of Municipal shops and flats.

Online NOC System: Citizens by use this system can online demand a no-objection certificate from the Municipalities before starting any construction. The Municipality, after verification, generates the NOC certificate.

Online Services: After the analysis and interpretation of it was found that after the implementation of the Digital India program, WMC is providing various online or digital services through the website to the citizens. It is a successful transformation from the traditional (manual) delivery of services. These online services are Online Birth Certificate, Online Building Permission, Online RTI Application, Online Pay Rent of Municipal Shop/Flat, Online User Charges, Online Booking of Septic/Water Tank, E Tendering, Online NOC/License System, and Online Public Grievance System.

Improved Transparency and Accountability: With the implementation of the Digital India Programme, it was found by the researcher that the transparency and accountability in the services provided by Warangal Municipal Corporation have improved, as the information related to the online services which are delivered by WMC is open and accessible to all by means of the internet. It was found that this online delivery of WMC services had removed discretion from WMC employees and provided citizens as watchdogs in order to monitor potential corruption at different levels of WMC.

Time-bound and efficient delivery of services: With the implementation of ICT-based digital services, WMC officials are bound to deliver services within a specific time period. It is the liability of WMC employees to deliver services on time. Now the citizens can track the status of their application through the website by using a unique application ID. Thus, the delivery of services has become time-bound. In this way efficiency of services provided by WMC had increased.

Conclusion

While summing up, it can be said that the Digital India programme has created a new paradigm, under which innovative ways of delivery of services have been conceived which focused not only on service delivery but on customer satisfaction as well. The implementation of Digital India Initiatives in Jammu Municipal Corporation has improved efficiency, enhanced quality of services, improved overall trust between citizens and WMC, increased accessibility of WMC services, increased transparency in the functioning of Municipal Corporation, reduced the time limit for providing services, enhanced capacities and performances of WMC, increased citizen participation, and reduced corrupt practices. It is a move from governance towards good governance.



Although the implementation of Digital India Initiatives in WMC has improved the functioning of WMC still there are still some challenges faced by Jammu Municipal Corporation in the proper implementation of digital services like Network Connectivity, Digital Infrastructure, language barrier, cyber-crime, lack of awareness, lack of digital literacy, and shortage of technical employees in WMC.

But in spite of the pros and cons of the implementation of Digital India Initiatives in WMC, it helped a lot in the empowerment of citizens. It helped in breaking the web of bureaucracy, reducing red-tapism, and corruption. It provided better delivery of services and held the employees of WMC accountable to citizens.

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EVOLUTION OF FEDERALISM IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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Abstract

India, as a vast and diverse country, has witnessed the evolution of federalism in response to a wide range of socio-political, economic, and cultural factors. The development of Indian federalism can be traced from its early roots in the British colonial period, when administrative decentralization and limited provincial autonomy were introduced, to its transformation after independence with the framing of the Constitution. The Constitution established a distinctive federal structure that combined federal principles with strong unitary features, aiming to balance the imperative of national unity with the accommodation of linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity. Over the decades, this structure has continuously adapted to changing political realities and governance needs. Despite its strengths, the functioning of India's federal system has encountered several enduring challenges. One of the most significant issues is the persistent tension between centralization and decentralization of power, which often shapes centre-state relations. Regional disparities in economic development further complicate federal cooperation, as states differ widely in their fiscal capacities and developmental priorities. The complexities of intergovernmental relations—ranging from disputes over resources to the coordination of national programs—also pose obstacles to smooth federal functioning. Moreover, the shifting political landscape, marked by the rise of regional parties, coalition governments, and increasingly competitive politics, has reshaped the role of state governments and influenced the balance of power within the federation. The paper further discusses the impact of economic reforms, the rise of regional parties, and increasing demands for autonomy, which have all reshaped the federal structure in contemporary India. In examining the prospects of federalism in India, the paper emphasizes the need for a more inclusive approach that ensures equitable growth, strengthens the role of states, and fosters greater cooperation between the Union and state governments. The study also reflects on the importance of federalism in promoting national unity while respecting regional diversity.

Keywords: *Federalism, India, Challenges, Regional Disparities, Autonomy*

Introduction

Federalism in India represents a unique blend of unity and diversity, shaped by the country's vast geographical expanse, cultural multiplicity, and historical evolution. The Indian model of federalism has undergone significant changes since the framing of the Constitution in 1950, evolving to meet the demands of an increasingly complex socio-political landscape. India's federal structure was designed with the intention of balancing power between the central government and individual states while maintaining national unity. However, over the decades, this balance has often been tested by various challenges, including demands for greater autonomy, regional disparities, and tensions between the Union and state governments.

Federalism has certain governance issues across all types of nations, particularly in the context of the need to have governance as close to people as possible and to enforce accountability. But, it is in the



plural group of nations, with their inherent diversity, that federalism as a concept has had to show ingenuity and innovation in managing contradictions. In fact, large plural democracies have been successful only by having federalism sculpted into their institutional architecture. In the contemporary world, a system of governance has gained legitimacy and general acceptance because it fulfills the felt needs and aspirations of the people. Federalism, too, has come to stay because it serves a purpose. It has successfully facilitated the opposing pulls and pressures of individual identities and the needs of a national identity.

For a vast and diverse country like India. It tries to facilitate the socio-political cooperation between two sets of identities through various structural mechanisms of shared rule. Center-state relations and state autonomy have become the cardinal issues of Indian federalism. The union government appointed the Sarkaria Commission in 1983 to examine and review the working of the Indian Federalism, but this Commission did not make any useful recommendations for structuring the Indian federalism in a proper manner. The Union government also took a very easy approach to some of the recommendations made by this commission. For smooth operationalization of Indian federalism union government should sort out the issues of languages, religion, culture, etc., in various regions that have been created for political gains. The big threat to federalism is not the federal units, but the union itself is responsible for chaos and confusion.

Literature Review

Historical Evolution of Indian Federalism: Scholars such as K.C. Wheare (1951) have emphasized the significance of the British colonial legacy in shaping the federal structure in India. In his seminal work on federalism, noted that while India adopted a federal system, it was heavily influenced by the unitary nature of the British parliamentary system. His analysis highlighted that Indian federalism was designed to preserve unity, with a strong central government that could maintain control over a vast and diverse subcontinent. Similarly, Granville Austin (1966) observed that the Indian Constitution provided a "unique" form of federalism, one that was both federal and unitary, reflecting the need to accommodate India's linguistic, cultural, and regional diversity within a unified framework.

Constitutional Framework and Centralization: The role of the Indian Constitution in shaping federalism has been widely discussed by scholars like M.P. Jain (2014), who argues that the Constitution envisions a strong central government to ensure national integration and stability. While the Constitution acknowledges the federal nature of India, it also grants significant powers to the Union through provisions like the residuary power's clause (Article 248) and the use of Article 356 (President's Rule), which allows the central government to dissolve state governments in times of crisis. Some scholars have critiqued this centralization as a factor that limits the autonomy of states, leading to a potential imbalance in the federal structure (Subrata Mitra, 2001).

Regionalism and Autonomy Movements: The tension between centralization and state autonomy has been a major focus in the literature. Researchers like Arvind Panagariya (2008) and Christophe Jaffrelot (2007) have analyzed the rise of regional parties and the increasing demand for autonomy, particularly in states like Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir. These movements have often challenged the central government's authority and called for greater regional representation in decision-making processes. Scholars argue that these regional aspirations reflect the broader challenge of accommodating India's regional diversity within the federal framework.



Economic Reforms and Fiscal Federalism: Economic reforms in the 1990s had a significant impact on the federal system, especially in terms of fiscal federalism. The rise of neoliberal policies and the greater emphasis on market-driven growth led to debates over the role of the central and state governments in managing economic development. Scholars like N. S. Ramaswamy (2000) and Jean Dreze (2002) have examined the fiscal relationships between the center and states, focusing on the distribution of resources, tax collection, and the challenges of managing intergovernmental transfers. The issue of fiscal federalism has become increasingly critical, especially as states demand a larger share of central resources to address regional disparities.

Federalism and Political Representation: Political scholars such as R. K. Jain (2006) and Paul Brass (1990) have emphasized the role of federalism in promoting political representation and accommodating diverse interests. These scholars argue that India's federal system enables states to assert their political and cultural identities through regional parties and political platforms. However, they also note the challenges that arise when regional interests clash with national priorities, leading to conflicts that sometimes undermine the functioning of the federal system.

Recent Developments and Contemporary Challenges: In more recent scholarship, there has been increasing attention on the contemporary challenges facing Indian federalism, including the growing centralization of power under the current government. Scholars like Sudha Pai (2017) and Pratap Bhanu Mehta (2020) have critically examined how the centralization of power under the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government has altered the balance of power between the Union and states. These scholars argue that such trends pose risks to the federal structure by diminishing state autonomy and fostering a more unitary state.

Future Prospects and Reforms: The future of federalism in India has been the subject of debates on potential reforms. Scholars such as Shubhankar Dam (2018) and Devesh Kapur (2019) advocate for a more cooperative model of federalism, where the Union and state governments work collaboratively to address the challenges of economic development, regional inequalities, and political representation. They argue that greater fiscal devolution, increased state participation in policymaking, and the strengthening of intergovernmental institutions like the Finance Commission and the Inter-State Council could enhance the resilience of Indian federalism.

Federalism in India

The study of federalism in India can be approached through a variety of theoretical lenses, each providing a unique perspective on the functioning and evolution of the federal system. Theoretical frameworks help explain the dynamics of power distribution, political processes, and the relationship between the central government and state governments. This section outlines key theoretical approaches that inform the understanding of Indian federalism.

Dual Federalism: One of the foundational theories of federalism is dual federalism, which posits that there is a clear and distinct separation of powers between the central government and state governments. This framework is typically associated with a rigid division of authority, where each level of government operates within its designated sphere without interference from the other. While dual federalism may be seen as an ideal model, it does not fully capture the flexibility of India's federal system. Indian federalism, with its emphasis on national unity, has often leaned towards a more unitary system where the central government has significant powers over states, particularly in matters of national importance. However, dual federalism still offers insight into the early post-



independence approach, where federalism was conceptualized as a system that respects state autonomy while ensuring national unity.

Cooperative Federalism: In contrast to dual federalism, cooperative federalism emphasizes collaboration and shared responsibilities between different levels of government. This approach suggests that federal systems function best when the Union and states cooperate on key issues, such as economic development, governance, and policy implementation. India's federal system has evolved significantly in this direction, especially in the post-1990s era, with the central government and states increasingly engaging in joint decision-making processes. Cooperative federalism is especially relevant in the context of India's diverse and complex socio-political landscape, where issues like poverty alleviation, infrastructure development, and environmental policy require joint efforts at both the central and state levels. The theory highlights the importance of institutional mechanisms like the Finance Commission, the Inter-State Council, and the Planning Commission (now NITI Aayog) in facilitating intergovernmental coordination.

Centralized Federalism: Centralized federalism refers to a system in which the central government holds predominant power, often to the detriment of state autonomy. This theoretical model is particularly relevant in the context of India, where the Constitution allows for extensive central control through provisions such as Article 356 (President's Rule) and the residuary powers clause. Scholars have argued that India's federal system has often operated in a centralized manner, particularly in times of political or economic crises, and that the central government's ability to override state governments has undermined the spirit of federalism. Centralized federalism also reflects the political realities in India, where a strong central authority has been viewed as essential to maintaining national unity amidst the country's immense diversity. The concept of centralized federalism is crucial to understanding the tensions between the central and state governments in India, particularly in the context of growing demands for state autonomy.

Fiscal Federalism: Fiscal federalism refers to the distribution of financial resources and responsibilities between different levels of government. In India, fiscal federalism plays a key role in balancing the centralization of power with the autonomy of states. The theoretical framework of fiscal federalism examines the structure of financial transfers from the central government to the states and how this distribution influences the functioning of federalism. The role of the Finance Commission in determining the allocation of resources between the Union and states, as well as the issues related to tax revenue sharing, is central to this theory. Researchers like Jean Dreze and Amartya Sen have emphasized how fiscal policies and intergovernmental transfers shape regional development and inequality in India. The theory of fiscal federalism is critical for understanding how economic resources, taxation, and spending responsibilities are distributed, and how these arrangements affect state autonomy and central-state relations.

Multiculturalism and Federalism: Given India's rich diversity in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, and culture, theories of multiculturalism are also pertinent to the study of federalism. Multicultural federalism suggests that the federal system should allow for the accommodation of diverse cultural and linguistic groups, giving them autonomy to preserve and promote their identities. In the Indian context, this theory is particularly relevant in understanding the accommodation of linguistic minorities, regional aspirations, and the role of states in safeguarding cultural diversity. The demand for the creation of new states (e.g., Telangana, Chhattisgarh) or for greater autonomy in existing states reflects the multicultural dynamics within Indian federalism. This theoretical approach



emphasizes the importance of federalism as a tool for managing diversity and ensuring that minority and regional identities are respected within the larger national framework.

Asymmetrical Federalism: Asymmetrical federalism refers to a system where different states or regions may have different levels of autonomy or powers, depending on their unique characteristics. In India, this is seen in the special provisions granted to certain states, such as Jammu and Kashmir (before the abrogation of Article 370), and the northeastern states, which have greater autonomy in certain areas under the provisions of Article 371 and the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Asymmetrical federalism helps explain the diversity of regional demands for autonomy and the varying political and cultural landscapes across states. This approach emphasizes that federalism is not a "one-size-fits-all" model but can be tailored to meet the unique needs of different regions, while maintaining the overall integrity of the Union.

Institutional Theories of Federalism: Theoretical approaches focused on institutionalism examine the formal and informal institutions that govern the relationship between the Union and the states. These include political institutions such as the Parliament, the Rajya Sabha (Council of States), and the role of the Governor in state affairs, as well as administrative institutions like the Inter-State Council and the NITI Aayog. Scholars like Ranabir Samaddar (2002) and Sudha Pai (2017) have explored how these institutions facilitate or hinder cooperation between the center and states. The institutional approach is also concerned with how the political party system, electoral processes, and the structure of governance influence federal relations in practice.

Understanding India's Political System: Federalism in India is integral to its political system, serving as a framework for managing the country's unity while accommodating its vast diversity. By analyzing the evolution of Indian federalism, one gains insight into the mechanisms that have enabled India to maintain political stability despite its pluralistic society. Understanding the functioning of the federal system helps in grasping the intricacies of power-sharing between the Union and the states and the challenges inherent in such a structure.

Impact on National Unity and Regional Diversity: India's federal structure is designed to ensure national unity while respecting regional diversity. The system plays a crucial role in balancing the demands for regional autonomy with the need for cohesive national governance. Examining the evolution of federalism sheds light on how India has managed to accommodate diverse cultural, linguistic, and regional identities while maintaining the integrity of the Union. This is essential in a country as diverse as India, where issues of ethnicity, language, and religion often intersect with political demands.

Relevance to Contemporary Political Debates: The issue of federalism is central to contemporary political debates in India. The growing demand for greater state autonomy, the rise of regional parties, and the challenges of intergovernmental relations are all critical factors influencing the federal structure today. The topic is especially significant in the context of current political developments, where there are increasing calls for a more balanced distribution of power between the central government and the states. This has implications for the governance model, fiscal policy, political representation, and national integration.

Implications for Governance and Policy-Making: Understanding the evolution of federalism in India has important implications for policy-making and governance at both the central and state



levels. The distribution of resources, tax policies, and the decision-making process on critical issues such as education, healthcare, and infrastructure development are all influenced by the dynamics of federalism. Analyzing how the federal system has adapted over time allows policymakers to identify areas for reform, ensuring a more effective, equitable, and cooperative governance system.

Challenges of Economic and Fiscal Federalism: The financial relationship between the center and the states has been a focal point in discussions on Indian federalism. The fiscal dimension of federalism—comprising revenue-sharing, financial transfers, and tax policies—has significant implications for regional development and economic equality. By studying the challenges faced by the federal system, especially in terms of fiscal imbalances and the need for equitable resource allocation, the topic addresses the core issues of economic governance that affect millions of citizens.

Regional Autonomy and Political Movements: The evolution of federalism is also tied to regional autonomy movements, where states demand greater control over local resources, governance, and political representation. Understanding these movements is essential for analyzing the evolving nature of Indian democracy and the potential for decentralization. The topic is significant in light of the historical and ongoing struggles for greater state autonomy, particularly in regions like Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, and the northeastern states. Such movements have implications for national unity, the functioning of democratic institutions, and the rights of states within the Union.

The Future of Indian Federalism: Given the ongoing political, economic, and social transformations in India, it is critical to analyze the future prospects of Indian federalism. How will the balance between the center and states evolve in response to changing political dynamics, economic challenges, and the rise of new regional issues? Understanding the future trajectory of federalism is vital for addressing key questions about governance reforms, the role of regional parties, and the challenges of equitable development across diverse states.

Academic Contribution and Broader Understanding of Federalism: From an academic standpoint, this topic contributes to broader discussions on federalism as a political concept. India's federal system offers a distinctive case that blends unitary and federal characteristics, making it an important area of study in comparative political science. The study of Indian federalism enriches the global discourse on federalism by providing insights into how large, diverse democracies can structure governance to balance unity with diversity.

Conclusion

The evolution of federalism in India is a critical area of study for understanding the political, economic, and social fabric of the country. Over the years, India's federal system has developed in response to the demands of its diverse population, balancing the need for national unity with the recognition of regional identities and aspirations. While federalism has played an essential role in maintaining political stability and fostering inclusive governance, it has also faced several challenges, including tensions over resource allocation, state autonomy, and the centralization of power. Throughout its history, Indian federalism has been shaped by a combination of constitutional provisions, political decisions, and social movements. The country's hybrid federal structure—mixing unitary and federal elements—has allowed it to adapt to changing political and economic conditions. However, this flexibility has also led to complexities in the functioning of the system, particularly when addressing regional disparities and the demands of diverse states for greater autonomy.



The ongoing debates surrounding federalism in India are central to discussions about governance, political representation, and equitable development. As the country faces new challenges, including economic inequality, regionalism, and global political shifts, the future of Indian federalism will depend on its ability to evolve and address these issues in a way that promotes cooperation between the center and states. The evolution of federalism will also depend on reforms that ensure a fair distribution of resources, enhance inter-governmental cooperation, and provide a voice to regional parties and local communities.

Despite the challenges, Indian federalism holds significant promise in terms of managing the country's diversity and fostering democratic governance. The study of Indian federalism, its challenges, and prospects offers valuable lessons for other countries with similar issues of governance, diversity, and regional demands. By continuing to explore the dynamics of federalism in India, scholars, policymakers, and citizens can contribute to a more balanced, effective, and inclusive federal system that ensures national unity while respecting regional autonomy.

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INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: A COMPREHENSIVE STUDY

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Abstract:

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) represents the cumulative wisdom, practices, innovations, and worldviews developed by local communities through centuries of close interaction with nature. Indigenous Knowledge (IK), also known as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), represents the cumulative, evolving body of experience, wisdom, and practices held by indigenous and local communities. Rooted in generations of intimate interaction with the environment, IK offers sustainable approaches to ecological management, resource conservation, and ethical human–nature relationships. In the context of accelerating environmental degradation—climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and water crises—IK has gained global recognition as a vital component of environmental ethics and sustainability science. This paper provides an expanded analysis of the philosophical foundations, cultural significance, and ecological applications of Indigenous Knowledge. It highlights the ways in which indigenous worldviews nurture environmental ethics through reciprocity, respect, spiritual values, and collective responsibility. Drawing from global and Indian examples, the paper examines the role of IK in forests, agriculture, water management, biodiversity preservation, climate resilience, and community governance. It also addresses the threats IK faces due to globalization, modernization, and policy gaps. The study concludes by emphasizing the need for integrating Indigenous Knowledge with contemporary environmental strategies to build a sustainable and ethical planet.

Keywords: *Environmental Ethics, Sustainability, Biodiversity, Community-Based Management, Conservation Practices, Climate Adaptation, Tribal Communities.*

Introduction

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) constitutes one of humanity's oldest knowledge systems, deeply embedded in local cultures, values, and social structures. It includes practical wisdom related to land, agriculture, forests, water, weather, medicinal plants, and animal behavior. Indigenous communities acquire this knowledge through centuries of observation, experimentation, and adaptation to local ecosystems. With the global environmental crisis worsening, scholars, policymakers, and conservationists increasingly recognize IK as a critical resource for ecological restoration and sustainable development.

Environmental ethics, as a field of philosophy, examines moral principles guiding human interaction with nature. Indigenous cultures, despite geographical and cultural diversity, share a remarkably consistent ethical orientation toward nature—one based on stewardship rather than exploitation. Their worldviews view nature as sacred, interconnected, and animate, and humans as responsible caretakers rather than dominant users. This article expands upon conceptual, cultural, ecological, and ethical dimensions of Indigenous Knowledge, providing a detailed, multidisciplinary analysis suitable for extended academic study.



2. Understanding Indigenous Knowledge

2.1 Definition and Scope

Indigenous Knowledge (IK) refers to locally developed knowledge systems that are unique to particular cultures. It is acquired through:

- ❖ Oral traditions
- ❖ Cultural rituals
- ❖ Community practices
- ❖ Observation of natural cycles
- ❖ Hands-on experience
- ❖ Intergenerational transmission

The UN and UNESCO define IK as the “knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous and local communities developed from experience gained over centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment.”

2.2 Characteristics of Indigenous Knowledge

Indigenous knowledge systems are distinguished by:

1. Holism: IK integrates spiritual, ecological, economic, and social dimensions.
2. Environmental sustainability: Long-term ecological equilibrium is ensured by practices.
3. Community orientation: Knowledge is owned collectively.
4. Context-specificity: Practices adapt to local ecosystems.
5. Dynamic nature: IK evolves with changing environmental conditions.
6. Embeddedness in culture: Religion, festivals, and social norms shape resource management.

3. Indigenous Worldviews and Environmental Ethics

3.1 The Ethical Foundations of Indigenous Worldviews

Indigenous ethics are grounded in:

- Sacredness of nature
- Kinship connecting plants, animals, and people
- Reciprocity with the environment
- Moderation and restraint
- Intergenerational responsibility

For many indigenous cultures, harming nature is equivalent to harming the community’s spiritual identity.

3.2 Nature as a Living Entity

- Many indigenous communities believe in a personified nature:
- Mother Earth (North American tribes)
- Prakruti/Mother Nature (Indian traditions)
- Deity of Forests (Vanadevata) (Indian tribal groups)
- Mountain Spirits (Andean tribes)
- Water Spirits (African communities)

This worldview fosters emotional and moral connections with ecosystems.

3.3 Rituals, Customs, and Taboos

- ❖ Environmental protection is enforced through:



- ❖ Sacred groves
- Seasonal bans on hunting and fishing
- Harvesting limits
- Water bodies are ritually protected.
- Clan-based resource stewardship

Examples:

- Kavu (Kerala): Sacred forests protected for centuries.
- Naga festivals reinforce ecological respect and collective forest management.
- Gond tribal beliefs prohibit hunting pregnant animals.

4. Indigenous Knowledge in the Management of Natural Resources

Forest Conservation Practices

Indigenous forest management includes:

- Selective harvesting of timber
- Rotational forest use
- Protection of sacred groves
- Use of fire to maintain forest health
- Community-controlled hunting

Case studies:

- ❖ Bishnoi community (Rajasthan): Protects wildlife and trees with strict ethical rules.
- ❖ Khasi and Garo tribes (Meghalaya): Maintain sacred groves with high biodiversity.
- ❖ Baiga tribe (MP) practice “bevaru” shifting cultivation with minimal ecological damage.

4.1 Water Management and Watershed Conservation

Indigenous communities develop sophisticated water systems:

- ❖ Zabo system (Nagaland): Rainwater harvesting integrated with forestry.
- ❖ Johads (Rajasthan): Traditional check-dams for water recharge.
- ❖ Apatani irrigation (Arunachal Pradesh): Wetland-based paddy cultivation.
- ❖ Bamboo drip irrigation (Meghalaya): Eco-friendly water distribution.

4.3 Sustainable Agriculture Practices

Key indigenous agricultural methods include:

- Mixed cropping and polyculture
- Use of traditional drought-resistant crops (e.g., millets)
- Natural pesticides from neem, turmeric, and ash
- Traditional seed preservation
- Community seed banks
- Organic manure (cow dung, green leaves)

Example: The Kuruma tribe (Kerala) uses traditional pest-control and multi-layer farming systems.

4.4 Traditional Medicine and Ethnobotany

- Indigenous healers possess rich knowledge of medicinal plants:
- Adivasi herbal practices for treating wounds, fevers, and skin diseases
- Ayurvedic and Siddha systems originated from indigenous traditions
- Use of forest plants like Tulsi, Neem, Amla, Guduchi



- This knowledge contributes to global pharmaceutical research.

5. Indigenous Knowledge and Biodiversity Conservation

Indigenous territories cover only 22% of the world's land but sustain 80% of global biodiversity.

Reasons:

- Community ownership prevents commercial exploitation
- Traditional rules regulate resource use
- Deep ecological awareness
- Cultural reverence for plants and animals

Examples:

- Sarna worship among Santhal tribes protects forest patches.
- Totemic species protection among Australian Aboriginal groups.
- Naga morungs (youth dormitories) educate children in ecological ethics.

5.1 Indigenous Wisdom and Resistance to Climate Change

Indigenous communities have developed innovative adaptive strategies:

- Seasonal calendars based on star positions
- Predicting rainfall through wind, bird, and insect behavior
- Migration patterns for livestock (Maasai)
- Cyclone prediction by coastal tribes using ocean patterns
- Traditional storage techniques to withstand drought
- Use of climate-resilient seeds (kodo, foxtail millet)
- During disasters, community-based knowledge ensures survival and recovery.

5.2 Modernization and Loss of Cultural Practices

Younger generations often shift to modern education and occupations, reducing the transmission of IK.

5.3 Land Displacement

Mining, dams, industries, and deforestation displace indigenous communities.

5.4 Globalization

Commercial products replace traditional materials.

5.5 Climate Change

Alters natural cycles, making traditional predictions difficult.

5.6 Lack of Documentation

Much knowledge is oral; if elders pass away, knowledge disappears.

5.7 Policy Marginalization

Government conservation often excludes indigenous people, such as forced eviction from forests.

6. Integrating Indigenous Knowledge in Modern Environmental Governance

6.1 Policy Recommendations

- Recognizing land rights
- Documentation of Indigenous Knowledge
- Incorporating Native Americans into environmental planning
- Enforcing the Forest Rights Act (FRA, 2006)
- Ensuring benefit-sharing of biodiversity resources (CBD guidelines)

6.2 Role of Education

- Including IK in the undergraduate and primary school curriculum



- Community–researcher collaboration
- Promoting eco-literacy based on indigenous examples

6.3 Combined Knowledge Systems

- The best environmental outcomes occur when:
- Modern science provides technology
- Indigenous Knowledge offers ecological wisdom

Examples:

- Joint Forest Management (JFM)
- Agroforestry combines traditional and scientific methods
- Biodiversity registers maintained with tribal input

Conclusion

Indigenous Knowledge is an invaluable resource for environmental ethics and sustainable development. Rooted in centuries of observation and cultural wisdom, IK fosters respect, reciprocity, and balance with nature. As modern environmental challenges intensify, the world must look toward indigenous systems for guidance in biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, and ecological governance. Strengthening Indigenous Knowledge requires recognition of cultural rights, policy support, documentation, and intergenerational transmission. Integrating IK with modern science can create a more ethical and sustainable relationship between humans and the Earth. Indigenous worldviews remind us that nature is not a commodity but a living community to which we belong—and for whose well-being we are responsible.

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ROLE OF MSMEs IN INDIA'S GROWTH VISION 2047

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Abstract

India's vision of becoming a *Developed, Equitable, and Sustainable Republic* by 2047, a goal known as **Viksit Bharat @ 2047** demands a structural transformation of its economic landscape. Among the most crucial drivers of this transformation are **Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)**, the rapidly expanding **startup ecosystem**, and the rise of **innovation-led growth**. Together, these sectors have the potential to accelerate economic development, generate inclusive employment, and strengthen India's position in global value chains. MSMEs currently contribute significantly to India's GDP, exports, and employment generation, making them foundational to inclusive growth. Their ability to empower rural populations, women entrepreneurs, and marginalized communities makes them essential for achieving equitable development by 2047. Simultaneously, India's startup ecosystem, now the world's third largest, has emerged as a powerful catalyst for technological advancement and high-skilled job creation. Innovations in fintech, agritech, health-tech, deep-tech, and green technologies are reshaping Indian markets and enabling new pathways for sustainable development. This paper examines the strategic role of MSMEs and startups in shaping India's development trajectory, discusses the opportunities arising from technological innovation, and highlights the major challenges that must be addressed.

Introduction

India is approaching the centenary of its independence and has set the national vision of achieving the status of a developed, equitable, and sustainable nation by 2047. To meet this ambitious target, the country must enhance productivity, increase technological capacity, and enable broad-based participation in economic development. Within this context, MSMEs, startups, and innovation-led enterprises act as engines of growth, contributing significantly to GDP, exports, employment, and regional development. With over 6.3 crore MSMEs and one of the world's fastest-growing startup ecosystems, India is strategically positioned to harness innovation for transformational change.

Contribution to the MSMEs in the Economy

- Account for 30% of India's GDP (approx.).
- Contribute nearly 48% to India's exports.
- Employ 110 million+ people.
- Ensure regional and socio-economic balance by promoting rural industrialization.

MSMEs in Inclusive Development

- Enable participation of women, SC/ST entrepreneurs, and rural youth.
- Drive local manufacturing under Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- Promote decentralized economic activity, reducing urban-rural inequality.



Importance of Innovation

- Enhancing productivity
- Increasing global competitiveness
- Creating sustainable solutions in energy, environment, and agriculture
- Moving India from a service-led to a technology-led economy

Objectives of Strengthening MSMEs

1. Enhance the productivity and global competitiveness of Indian enterprises.
2. Promote sustainable and green technologies across sectors.
3. Create inclusive employment opportunities, particularly for youth and women.
4. Boost the export capacity of MSMEs and technology startups.
5. Integrate Indian firms into global value chains (GVCs).
6. Strengthen digital capabilities and promote Industry 4.0 adoption.
7. Increase innovation output through R&D and intellectual property creation.
8. Foster resilient local supply chains for national self-reliance.

Challenges Faced by MSMEs, Startups, and the Innovation Ecosystem

Finance-Related Challenges

- Limited access to affordable credit.
- Insufficient venture capital in Tier-2/3 cities.
- Delay in payments to MSMEs by large companies and government departments.

Technology Gaps

- Low adoption of Industry 4.0 (AI, robotics, IoT)
- Limited R&D investments.
- Dependency on imported technologies.

Infrastructure Issues

- Inadequate power, logistics, and digital infrastructure in rural areas.
- High cost of compliance and regulatory burden.

Skill Gaps

- Shortage of skilled labour for high-tech manufacturing.
- Limited entrepreneurial training and business management skills.

Market Barriers

- Intense global competition.
- Inadequate branding and international market access.



- Fragmented supply chains.

Policy and Regulatory Challenges

- Complex tax structure and compliance requirements.
- Policy uncertainty for startups in emerging sectors
- Government Policies and Initiatives Supporting this Vision

MSME-Focused Initiatives

- Udyam Registration for simplified classification.
- CGTMSE (Credit Guarantee Fund) for collateral-free loans.
- Aatmanirbhar Bharat and PLI schemes for manufacturing empowerment.
- Cluster Development Programme to promote local specialization.

Startup and Innovation Policies

- Startup India for easier regulations and tax incentives.
- Fund of Funds and SIDBI initiatives for venture financing.
- Atal Innovation Mission and Incubation Centers.
- Digital India for strengthening digital public infrastructure.

Sustainability Initiatives

- National Green Hydrogen Mission.
- Solar and renewable energy targets for 2030–2047.
- Circular economy and waste-to-wealth initiatives.

Strategies for Accelerating MSME, Startup, and Innovation-Led Growth for India @ 2047

Improving Access to Finance

- Expand digital lending platforms.
- Promote venture capital in smaller cities.
- Ensure timely payment enforcement to MSMEs.

Strengthening Infrastructure

- Development of MSME industrial parks.
- Green logistics, improved supply chain systems.
- Broadband and 5G expansion in rural India.

Policy Reforms

- Simplify GST compliance.
- Introduce startup-friendly regulations in fintech, health-tech, and agritech.



- Foster ease of doing business at the state level.

Sustainable and Green Growth

- Promote energy-efficient technologies for MSMEs.
- Support green startups (clean tech, waste management).
- Encourage carbon-neutral industrial clusters.

Expected Outcomes for India @ 2047

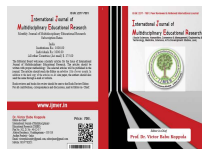
- India emerges as the world's 3rd or 2nd largest economy.
- MSMEs become globally competitive, technologically advanced units.
- Creation of 50 million+ new jobs driven by startups and innovation.
- Higher share of high-value manufacturing and exports.
- Achieving net-zero aligned industrial growth.
- Development of a resilient, inclusive economy with reduced regional inequality.

Conclusion

MSMEs, startups, and innovation are critical pillars in realizing India's vision of a *Developed Bharat* by 2047. Their growth will determine the extent to which India can create high-value employment, achieve sustainable development, and build an equitable society. By addressing existing challenges and strengthening policy support, India can unlock the full potential of innovation-led economic transformation.

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Cover Page



INDIA'S EXPERIENCE WITH CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

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Abstract

Human rights have grown in importance and vibrancy in the free world during the past 60 years. Human rights are as old as human civilization, as they acknowledge each person's intrinsic value and dignity. A person has certain rights as a human being from birth. Therefore, as a political concept with a moral foundation, the concept of human rights is civilization. The UN General Assembly's adoption and proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the middle of the 20th century codified the concern for and protection of human rights. The phrase "human rights" implies that all people have rights. Although there are certain examples of denial of this component of universality, whether overt or covert, they are quite widespread throughout the world. However, the moral basis of human rights to universality has not yet been questioned, at least not in theory. People have high hopes because of the concept of democracy. It is now a crucial component of political legitimacy. In actuality, it has been causing the most frustration and despair lately. Democracy and capitalism seem to have followed separate but parallel trajectories from the late 19th century. They became stronger during the 20th century, interacting with one another and creating an interface. This leads to the emergence of the welfare state notion, which defines the state's role in an interventionist way. According to Benjamin Barber, representative democracy "destroys participation and citizenship even as it serves accountability and private rights." The ethical underpinning of human rights is provided in the Preamble of the Indian Constitution, which is the most rights-based constitution in the world. Parts III and IV of the Constitution include the legal manifestation of these rights.

Keywords: *Constitution, human rights, Democracy, violence, crime, corruption, and India.*

Statement of the Problem

Humans must assess the definition and significance of the term "human rights." Human rights are universal and apply to all people equally, regardless of their differences, whether they are innate or acquired. Humans have certain rights, generally referred to as human rights, because they are reasoning beings. Individuals have the right to exercise their human rights from the moment of their birth. Human rights are inalienable rights that belong to every person, regardless of their nationality, sex, caste, creed, or religion. Human rights are vital because they pertain to people's freedom and dignity as well as their physical, moral, social, and spiritual well-being. Additionally, these rights are necessary for both monetary and moral advancement. Human rights, which are extremely important to people, are also known as fundamental rights, basic rights, and birth rights.

Human rights and justice are inextricably linked concepts. Human rights and justice are strongly intertwined. Human rights emphasize each person's right to an honorable life in addition to upholding human dignity and values. Humans have a life to live, but if they don't live with dignity, it becomes pointless. Unfortunately, certain societal arrangements prevent people from affirming their rights or living with dignity. It is unfair and self-serving for the dominant forces in society to attempt to explain



human rights from their own point of view. Therefore, structural change is necessary for the appropriate application of human rights. This will lead to the proper dissemination of justice, as the denial of justice is a denial of human rights.

Objectives:

The following goals and objectives guided the conduct of the current study:

- To conduct a comparative analysis of India's human rights and democratic ideals.
- To investigate the Indian people's democratic rights.
- To examine democracy's prospects from a global standpoint.
- To see how human rights and worldwide democracy are closely related.
- To recognize democracy as one of the most important human rights.
- To investigate India's democratic system and electoral process.
- To witness India's poor government and the criminalization of politics.
- To learn about corruption and scams in the Indian democracy.
- To monitor India's current state of women and children.
- To evaluate India's rise in ethnic and sectarian violence.
- To assess RTI's efficacy—a significant accomplishment of Indian democracy.
- To examine sectarian violence in several Indian states

India's constitution guarantees the creation of a sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic while considering the parliamentary system of governance. Additionally, several essential rights are guaranteed to Indian people under the Constitution. The Indian Constitution is among the world's most conservative constitutions. In its Preamble, it lays out the moral basis for human rights; in Parts III and IV of the Constitution, it describes the fundamental rights and the Directive Principles of State Policy, respectively. The Indian Constitution's Preamble seeks to ensure that every citizen has access to social, economic, and political justice, freedom of opinion, speech, belief, faith, and worship, equality of position and opportunity, and promotion of individual dignity among all members of the fraternity. In Part III of the Indian Constitution, all people are guaranteed fundamental rights without any kind of discrimination. It mostly addresses political and civic rights. Additionally, the government's administration is guided by a set of Directive Principles of State Policy.

Representative democracy is a parliamentary system of government in which citizens have the right to exercise their sovereign power through the legislature, whose members are chosen using the adult franchise. Human rights and globalized democracy are closely related. Although it is unfortunate to note that neither Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights nor Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights uses the term "democracy," democratic participation is, in fact, one of the human rights. Democracy is one of the most important human rights, and it is consistent with these rights at the level of human rights. Everyone is aware that open discussion and free debate are the cornerstones of democracy. Every citizen must have the right to take part in the democratic process if democracy is defined as governance of the people, by the people, and for the people. The essential core of democracy is lost in the absence of widespread involvement. According to contemporary theory, the goals of government are to guarantee the safety, well-being, and contentment of the populace. Although there are situations in which democracies degenerate into authoritarianism, there can never be a democratic government in which citizens do not have access to fundamental civil rights and liberties.



Election System and Democratic Process

The foundations of democracy include free and fair elections, the press, speech, and freedom, as well as judicial independence. In democratic systems, elections must be free and fair for democracy to remain meaningful. The fundamentals of democracy will be impacted if the electoral process is tainted in any way. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the relevant authorities to hold free and fair elections. A democracy is a form of government in which representatives of the people are chosen either directly or indirectly. Therefore, the best men with strong moral and ethical values from society must be chosen as the people's representatives in order to promote good administration or improve democracy. In India, a large number of elected parliamentarians—some of whom hold esteemed positions like ministerial office—engage in social crime. The Times of India and The Hindu, two recent news reports, state that 14 ministers (about 30%) in the current Council of Ministers have criminal histories. Therefore, people who are elected to the state legislature or the parliament must be fully prepared to perform their duties when called upon. If not, Indian democracy would go down the wrong path.

Right to Information

Every individual in a democratic nation like India has to be aware of their right to knowledge. These days, welfare states have enormous capabilities that might be abused for private benefit and detrimental to society. Since the Right to Information Act of 2005 made it possible to obtain information about government offices and authorities, those in positions of ultimate decision-making must be fully informed about governance and the government in order to make decisions that will benefit the people.

In its first report from 1966 to 1970, the Administrative Reforms Commission recommended a two-tiered system consisting of the Lok Pal and Lokayukta. The former handled complaints against ministers and secretaries to both the federal and state governments. Complaints against the remainder of the bureaucracy should be handled by the Lokyukta, one for the state and one for the center. In India, the Lok Pal law has a lengthy history. In 1968, it was initially proposed in parliament. The measure was introduced in the parliament many times between 1968 and 2013. In 1971, 1977, 1985, 1989, 1996, 1998, 2001, and 2011, it was first presented.

The Lok Pal bill was approved by both chambers of parliament at the end of 2013, fifty-two years after it was originally introduced. On December 17 and 18, 2013, respectively, the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha passed the bill. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013, went into effect on January 16, 2014, following the President of India's assent on January 1st, 2014. In the well-known case of State of Uttar Pradesh v. Raj Narain, the Supreme Court of India acknowledged for the first time that citizens have a right to know and assistance, that there can only be a few secrets in a responsible government where all public agents are accountable for their actions. In a different case, S.P. Gupta v. President of India, Justice Bhagwati acknowledges that the freedom of speech and expression includes the right to know. According to Article 21 of the Constitution, the right to know is a fundamental right that people of a free nation want in the larger context of the right to live on our land in this day and age.

The Indian Constitution's Preamble and Article 38 see social justice as the cornerstone that guarantees human dignity and a fulfilling existence. Justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity are all mandated by the Indian Constitution and are crucial to a democracy's development. Social justice is a powerful tool



to lessen the suffering of the weak, impoverished, Dalits, Muslims, tribal people, and other marginalized groups in society and to bring them up to the level of equality so they can have dignified lives. The idea of social justice is a crucial component of the intricate social transformation that aims to alleviate the disadvantaged groups and give life purpose for the benefit of society as a whole. Since Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights enshrines the right to an adequate standard of living, including adequate food and clothing as well as the "continuous improvement of living conditions," the state should provide the bare minimum of facilities to enable them to achieve at least a minimum standard of life, health, food, drinking water, etc. Therefore, human life is meaningless in a democracy like India if these rights are not upheld. Therefore, the Supreme Court of India determined that the right to justice and the right to health were fundamental rights in the case of *Air India Statutory Corp. v. United Labour Union*.

Corruption in Indian Democracy

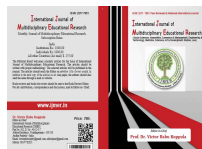
The most populous democracy in the world is being threatened by corruption. Maladministration and corruption have become essential components of our "democracy." According to Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perception Index (CPI), India has a score of 36, placing it 94th out of 177 nations and territories worldwide. The index, which ranges from 0 (very corrupt) to 100 (extremely clean), assesses the perceived levels of public sector corruption in nations all over the world.

Human Rights and Women in India

In Indian society, domestic violence is a prevalent and significant issue. The Elimination of Violence Against Women defines violence against women as follows, even though the word is not adequately defined under Indian law:

"Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life."

A young married woman is burnt, beaten to death, or forced to commit suicide every six hours, according to the NCRB. Every three minutes, there is a crime against a woman; every 29 minutes, there is a rape; every 77 minutes, there is a dowry death case; and every nine minutes, there is a case of abuse by a husband and his family. There were 2,44,270 recorded occurrences of crime against women (both under the IPC and SLL) in the nation in 2012, up 6.4% from 2,28,650 in 2011. Between 2008 and 2012, the number of these offenses climbed steadily, reaching 1,95,856 in 2008, 2,03,804 in 2009, 2,13,585 in 2010, 2,28,650 in 2011, and 2,44,270 in 2012. In 2012, 24,923 incidences of rape were recorded nationwide. Most rape instances are unreported to the police. The most concerning and rapidly increasing crime in India is rape. Between 1971 and 2012, this offense climbed by 902%. The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 2013 recently recognized further offenses, such as stalking, acid assaults, and gang rapes. Since crimes like "honor killing" are still not recognized by the law, there is no reliable information on them. Of course, rape is not the only kind of gender violence. According to the official NCRB statistics for 2012, there were 8,233 dowry deaths (section 302/304 IPC); 106,527 cases of cruelty by husbands and relatives (section 498-A IPC); 45,351 assaults on women with the intention of outraging their modesty (section 354 IPC); and 9,173 cases of insults to women's modesty (section 509 IPC). Except for dowry killings, all other crimes against women increased by about 6%



Cover Page



between 2008 and 2012. According to the 2012 NCRB data, there were 2.84 instances in India per hour, or almost one case every 20 minutes, and 3.55 people were arrested in those cases. The frequency of human trafficking increased by 1.1% from 3,517 instances in 2011 to 3,554 cases in 2012.

Human Rights and Children in India

One of the most significant human rights is seen to be education. In a democracy like India, children must have enough educational facilities. Only around 59% of children between the ages of 5 and 14 attend school, and the government does not mandate free and universal primary education. All children between the ages of six and fourteen have the right to free and compulsory education from the state, thanks to a 2002 amendment to the Constitution. One of the most serious violations of human rights is seen to be child abuse. Despite being illegal, it is nevertheless practiced in Indian society. In Indian society, female infanticide is a major issue. Due to female infanticide and sex determination during pregnancy, the ratio of female to male children has been steadily decreasing. In the 2001 Census, there were 933 women for every 1000 males. One hundred years ago, in 1901, the proportion of female children to male children was significantly greater. In 1901, there were 972 females for every 1000 males. Child abuse is a major issue in both public and private educational institutions. Crime against minors was reported to have increased by 15.3% in 2012 compared to 2011. In 2012, 38,172 crimes against minors were reported nationwide, up from 33,098 in 2011. Children are frequently beaten by teachers. The Child Marriage Restriction (Amendment) Act forbade child marriage; however, it is still a custom in Indian society, particularly in Northern India. The government does not adequately police the legislation, even though it increased the minimum marriage age for girls to marry from 15 to 18.

Caste System

In Indian civilization, the caste system is a scourge that causes social separation and flagrant human rights violations. In India, it has a lengthy history connected to Hinduism. It assigns distinct social, cultural, and religious duties to each caste and subcaste within society. Despite several attempts to end prejudice between various castes and subcastes, the practice has persisted. The practice of untouchability persists despite the fact that it is one of the fundamental rights listed in Article 17 of the Constitution. Dalits were confined to separate villages because many Hindus view them as a distinct group or as inferior to the caste system. It is customary for Dalits to be forced to work unpaid when the upper caste requests it. They face severe prejudice and are among the poorest residents. Additionally, they are frequently forbidden from visiting the same shrines or utilizing the same wells.

Ethnic Violence and Communalism in India

In July 2012, clashes between Muslims and Bodos broke out in the Indian state of Assam. Over 75 people lost their lives in fighting between the Bodos and Muslim groups in Assam during July and August 2012. After being uprooted from over 400 communities, 400,000 people were temporarily housed in 270 relief camps. There have been eleven reported missing persons. Tensions and bloodshed increased when armed organizations became involved. The insufficient response from the government drew criticism. The majority of victims and their families have not received justice ten years after the 2002 Gujarat Pogrom, which claimed the lives of over 2,000 Muslims. Attacks and prejudice against members of Dalit communities persisted. Seldom were special laws utilized to



pursue suspected offenders. Enraged by the death of a father whose daughter had married a Dalit, caste Hindus robbed and damaged 268 Dalit homes in Natham Colony, Tamil Nadu, in November 2012.

Minorities and Police in India

Individual rights are protected under the Indian Constitution. Any legislation approved by the Parliament or State Assemblies that violates the Indian Constitution may be declared unconstitutional by the courts. These guarantees are extended to religious, cultural, and linguistic minorities by Articles 25 to 30 of the Indian Constitution. Minorities' rights are unprotected, notwithstanding the Constitution's guarantees. There is a prevalent perception that the police are the people's guardians and intentionally play a political role. The Gujarat Pogrom has revealed the police force's prejudice against certain communities. A significant portion of the police force, although not the whole force, was incited by communal sentiments. They participated in acts of communal violence. The Indian people have been shocked by it. The Srikrishna Commission Report contains several examples of police prejudice and callousness that deprived the minority population of any means of self-defense. In his Report on Bombay Riots 1992-93, Justice B.N. Srikrishna stated, "The Commission is of the view that there is evidence of police bias against Muslims which has manifested itself in other ways like the harsh treatment given to them, failure to register even cognizable offences." There is evidence from various reports that the role of the police during communal riots has been far from desirable. It raises the important question of the performance of the police as an institution of the state in India.

Violence between security forces, militia, and Maoists

In eastern and central India, armed Maoists and security forces continued to clash. Civilians were frequently targeted by both sides. They are always spreading violence and murdering people. The authorities claimed that "Operation Green Hunt" was targeting Maoists and Naxalites during the operation in West Bengal's Lalgah. However, the indigenous people saw the "Green Hunt" as nothing more than a coordinated effort by the government and mining companies to seize their land and abundant natural resources by stifling the voices of those who battled for their country. Tribals believe they can protect themselves since Maoists and Naxals are armed. They are the ones who can't defend themselves.

Conclusion

Today's democracy seems to be "of the people," "by the people," but not properly or completely "for the people," shattering Abraham Lincoln's goal of an ideal democracy. There was a crisis of credibility for both the administration and its machinery. Due to the criminalization of politics and their slogan of seizing power, political parties, as the mechanism for legitimizing parliamentary democracy, suffered from a loss of trust. Human rights and justice should, in theory, take precedence over democratic decision-making power after considering prominent ideas of the relationship between justice and democracy. Since democracy is predicated on the need for justice as equal freedom, which is a human right in and of itself, actions on behalf of justice should be strictly confined to situations in which fundamental rights have been infringed. Article 17 of the Indian Constitution outlawed "untouchability." "Despite this, "untouchability" is still practiced in India in several ways. All types of crimes against women and children, as well as other human rights violations, have been steadily rising in India. Human rights should be considered while addressing injustice and violence within



communities. Many members of the minority population are falsely accused based solely on suspicion and then found not guilty after a protracted trial; as a result, their lives are being massacred. Article 21 of the Indian Constitution is violated when security personnel stage confrontations. Minority populations account for the majority of the casualties. Even while the government has taken several actions to improve the effectiveness of a tool like human rights, the primary issue is with its correct use. Acts about the preservation of human rights are crucial, but sadly, India lacks them considerably. It is necessary to focus less on legal requirements and more on the social action of Indian human rights organizations. In India, where a person's "social self" is significantly more important than in the West, the emphasis on the individual in Western societies is inappropriate. Only when individuals start to reach their full potential as human beings and assert their rights in both public and private domains can rights become genuine. Protecting everyone's human rights is essential to growing and sustaining Indian democracy. In the future, India's secular fabric and democratic principles would be seriously threatened.

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STRENGTHENING GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY: PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS AND GOVERNANCE REFORMS IN INDIA'S JOURNEY TO 2047

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Abstract

This paper provides an overview of the history, present, and future of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in India as the country proceeds to celebrate its 100th year of independence in the year 2047. PRIs have become an effective instrument of decentralized governance and grassroots democracy, since the historic 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, with more than 3 million elected representatives serving over 45 million people in rural India. The paper examines the institutional structure, functional areas, and performance indicators of PRIs and determines the key action areas of governance reforms that are necessary to enhance local self-governance. Based on empirical data from various states and the literature, the study assesses the application of devolution principles, fiscal federalism issues, capacity-building programs, and digital government integration. This paper contends that to attain the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and inclusive development by the year 2047, there is a need to reform the functioning of PRI, and this should be done by improving their financial independence, enhancing accountability processes, increasing institutional capacity, and ensuring proper convergence to national development programs. The results indicate that PRIs with proper empowerment and resource base can be used as a transformative tool of participatory democracy and sustainable rural development in the development path of India.

Keywords: *The Panchayat Raj Institutions, Grassroots Democracy, Local Self-Government, 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Decentralization, Governance Reforms, Rural Development, Fiscal Federalism, Digital Governance, India 2047.*

Introduction

The Experience of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in India is one of the most ambitious experiments in the world on the issue of democratic decentralization. In 1992, the Indian federal system was radically restructured by the constitutionally guaranteed local self-government, which became the third tier of government with the passage of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1992. This landmark act was enacted on April 24, 1993, and shifted the entire focus of centralized planning to participatory development and established a three-tier mechanism of Panchayati Raj that included Gram Panchayats at the Village level, Panchayat Samitis at the block level, and Zilla Parishads at the district level (Mathew, 2022).

With India making its Amrit Kaal rundown to 2047, the year the country will be celebrating its 100th anniversary of independence, Panchayat Raj Institutions have taken centre stage in the developmental debate of the country. The Government of India's vision 2047 is focused on inclusive growth, sustainable development, and equitable distribution of resources- the goals that essentially rely on the strong local governance structures. As the nearest point of contact between the citizens and the state,



PRIs are well placed to turn the country-level expectations into the practical outputs at the grassroots level (NITI Aayog, 2021).

Contemplating the modern importance of PRIs, it can be assumed to have more than just administrative decentralization but other, more profound, aspects of participatory democracy and social inclusion, as well as sustainable development. These institutions have more than 260,000 Panchayats throughout the country serving a population of about 700 million rural citizens, which control and govern resources, provide services, and influence the developmental priorities of two-thirds of the Indian population. Marginalized communities have been integrated by making Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women require compulsory representation, which has changed the social structure of the rural leaders, but issues of substantive empowerment remain (Jayal, 2021). This paper will critically examine the evolution of PRIs in institutions, present an analysis of the current governance issues, and reforms that would be imposed comprehensively to enhance grassroots democracy in the pursuit of 2047 by India. The systematic approach to constitutional provisions, policies, and empirical data allows the current research to add to the major debates regarding the effectiveness of decentralization and democratic deepening in the largest democracy in the world.

Panchayat Raj Institutions Historical Evolution Pre-Constitutional Foundations

The Panchayat Raj in India is also theoretically grounded in the ancient village republics and self-governing communities that formed the pre-colonial Indian society. The vision of the Gram Swaraj system of Mahatma Gandhi also had a significant effect on the freedom movement's view on the governance of rural areas, proposing the centered development of villages and the idea of participatory democracy. The Panchayats were to be the core of the political system in India, and Gandhi defined them as a republic that would be self-sufficient in its own affairs but reliant on each other in larger communal interests (Vyas, 2020).

Different opinions on the local self-government were expressed during the Constituent Assembly debates and finally led to including Panchayats in the Directive Principles of State Policy as stipulated in Article 40, which provided the states with the powers and authority to arrange village panchayats and grant them powers and authority. Nevertheless, these provisions were not justiciable, which led to unequal enforcement by states within the first decades after independence (Austin, 2019).

The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution: A Watershed Moment.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 was the result of more than fifty years of trial and error on the different forms of rural local governance. Recommendations for the creation of a three-level Panchayati Raj first came in the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957), and it was first implemented in Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The Ashok Mehta Committee (1977) and the G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985), and other reports identified weaknesses in systems and suggested changes, but no great improvements were made (Mathew, 2022).

Part IX was added to the Constitution by the 73rd Amendment, consisting of Articles 243 through 243O, which provided a standard structure of Panchayat Raj throughout India. The amendment required some of the most important provisions such as direct election to all levels, reserved seats to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and women (not less than one-third of total seats) fixed five-



year terms with elections within six months of dissolution, resource allocation through the constitution of State Finance Commissions and elections through the constitution of State Election Commissions (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2023).

The amendment added the Eleventh Schedule that outlined twenty-nine topics of possible devolution to the Panchayats, which included agriculture and land improvement, rural housing, and poverty alleviation schemes, to name a few. Nonetheless, Article 243G, which said that state governments could transfer functions, functionaries, and funds may endow, left a great deal of discretion to the state governments on the factual transfer of functions, which resulted in significant differences in PRI empowerment (Sivaramakrishnan, 2021).

Legal and Constitutional Environment. PRIs Structural Architecture.

The constitutional structure sets a three-level system of the Panchayati Raj, but the states with populations under two million can adopt a two-level system. Gram Panchayats are the lowest level, which exists at the village or group of villages level. The intermediate block-level rural local governance is the Panchayat Samitis, and the district-level rural local governance is the Zilla Parishad. India has around 260,512 Gram Panchayats, 6,614 Panchayat Samitis, and 589 Zilla Parishads, and over 3.1 million elected representatives are involved in the democratic government of India as of 2023 (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2023).

The structure and authorities of the Panchayats are different in different states depending on the conformity legislation. As a rule, Gram Panchayats are composed of directly elected members (Panches) and a directly elected Sarpanch as the chair. At the Panchayat Samitis and Zilla Parishads, there are both directly elected members and ex officio members who may be the Members of Parliament or the Members of Legislative Assemblies representing the area. The provisions of the reservation have changed the demographic characteristics of elected representatives dramatically, as in the case of women, who make up about 46% of elected members of the PRI, which is higher than 33%, the constitutional minimum (National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, 2022).

Table 1
Structure and Composition of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India (2023)

| PRI Tier | Number of Institutions | Elected Representatives | Women Representatives (%) |
|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gram Panchayats | 260,512 | 2,548,076 | 46.2 |
| Panchayat Samitis | 6,614 | 136,819 | 45.8 |
| Zilla Parishads | 589 | 16,567 | 44.7 |

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India (2023)

Functional Domains and Devolution

The Eleventh Schedule lists twenty-nine functional areas that could be transferred to Panchayats, and they include agriculture, minor irrigation, animal husbandry, fisheries, social forestry, small-scale industries, rural housing, drinking water, roads, poverty alleviation programs, education, health and sanitation, and family welfare, among others. Nonetheless, these functions are actually transferred



differently, depending on the political priorities and administrative cultures in the different states (Singh and Mahanty, 2023).

The principle of subsidiarity that supports the delegation of government functions down to the lowest possible level of administration is yet to be fully operationalized. Although the association between most states has been to pass conformity legislation and to assign to those states' subjects enumerated in the Eleventh Schedule, the effective devolution of the 3Fs, functions, functionaries, and funds, is limited. Most of the states have assigned subjects in the absence of any administrative personnel or sufficient financial means, which has compromised the PRI's capacity to perform the required functions (Jha and Mathur, 2022).

Current Performance and Implementation Status Devolution Index and Inter-State Variations

Periodically, the Ministry of Panchayati Raj reviews the status of devolution in the states by way of the Devolution Index, which measures the transfer of functions, finances, and functionaries to PRIs. The 2022-23 evaluation indicates that there are significant inter-state differences, where Karnataka, Kerala, and Maharashtra have a rather high devolution score, and some states in the northeastern part of the country, and some of the Hindi heartland states rank much lower. Such differences are historical, political, and administrative in nature, and they determine the readiness of the state governments to truly empower the local institutions (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2023).

Kerala has had a successful experience of democratic decentralization, with the People Plan Campaign being one such success story, where about 35-40 per cent of the plan expenditure in the state is planned to pass through the local governments. The state has decentralized across the industries and has established specific personnel at Panchayats, which has created the opportunity to deliver services effectively and to have a participatory plan. Conversely, most of the states that are less devolved tend to keep their control on rural development schemes centralized, pushing PRIs to an agency status without effective decision-making power (Isaac & Heller, 2020).

Table 2
Fiscal Devolution to Panchayat Raj Institutions (2018-2023)

| Financial Year | Central Transfers (₹ Crores) | State Transfers (₹ Crores) | Own Revenue (₹ Crores) |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 2018-19 | 62,488 | 98,240 | 8,450 |
| 2019-20 | 68,825 | 104,567 | 9,120 |
| 2020-21 | 73,412 | 108,934 | 8,890 |
| 2021-22 | 78,945 | 116,278 | 9,650 |
| 2022-23 | 84,192 | 123,456 | 10,340 |

Source: Compiled from Finance Commission Reports and Ministry of Panchayati Raj Data

Critical Challenges Confronting Panchayat Raj Institutions

Financial Constraints and Fiscal Autonomy

Probably the most severe limitation to the effectiveness of PRI is financial inadequacy. In spite of the constitutional requirements of regular transfers due to recommendations by Finance Commissions and



State Finance Commissions, PRIs are still very reliant on external funding and have low levels of own-source revenue generation. The statistics indicate that own revenues are less than 5 percent of all PRIs' finances, which are indicative of poor local tax bases, insufficient taxation authority, and revenue collection ability (Rao and Bird, 2020).

The 15th Finance Commission assigned 4.36 lakh crores to rural local bodies in the 2021-26 period, a huge increase compared to past allocations. There is, however, a concern about tied grants and untied grants, with much being allocated towards certain activities such as sanitation and water supply, and the Panchayat is not able to allocate resources according to its local needs. Moreover, the timely and efficient implementation of resources is limited by delays in the distribution of funds, the complexity of the processes, and tough terms of use (Jha, 2021).

Capacity Building and Human Resource Weaknesses

The shortage of capacity in various dimensions is a major handicap to the functioning of PRI. Elected officials are, in most cases, not trained in governance, financial management, and development planning. These gaps (technical staffing) at the Gram Panchayat levels are causing numerous institutions to lack administrative support. These are compounded by the lack of formal capacity-building programmes, ad hoc training interventions, and the high turnover of elected representatives because of the five-year term limits (Ramesh, 2022).

The bureaucracy of government plans, the multiplicity of rules, and the technicality of the development planning are beyond the capacity of most elected representatives, especially those representing the marginalized communities with little formal education. Although the democratic representation has been democratized through reservation policies, representatives lack proper support systems and capacity-building programs to have substantive decision-making powers (Narayana & Vemuri, 2020).

Parallel Administration and Bypassing

Also, the efficiency and power of PRIs are compromised by the growth of parallel institutions and programs that bypass PRIs. Schemes centrally sponsored tend to have different implementation vehicles at district and sub-district levels with specific staff and resources working outside of PRI structures. Such parallel institutions multiplied to form a fragmented governance architecture; they partition resources, mix accountability, and confuse citizens over where to take a grievance redressed (Baviskar and Mathew, 2021).

What is more, the centralized control patterns are maintained by hierarchical positioning of District Collectors as heads of district administrations, where Zilla Parishads have a small objective of supervision of numerous departmental line agencies. The adverse attitude of the state government departments to relinquish power to elected local agencies indicates the entrenched administrative cultures that were not ready to undergo true decentralization (Singh, 2023).

Critical Governance Reforms to enhance PRIs

Wide-ranging Devolution Strategy

To achieve decentralization in a meaningful way, the three Fs: functions, functionaries, and funds, must be transferred in a systematic manner using comprehensive strategies of devolution at the state level. State governments should implement the Act of Activities Mapping that clearly stipulates the



roles at the various levels of governance, removing duplication and confusion. The reallocation of functions should be supported with the relevant deployment of administrative staff and a sufficient financial base to ensure that PRIs have the necessary resources to perform the required functions and duties (Mathew, 2023).

Article 243ZD requires the activation and empowerment of the District Planning Committees, which will consolidate plans drawn by Panchayats and Municipalities to formulate an integrated plan of development of the districts. These institutional controls would help in coordination among the rural and urban local authorities, they would also aid in the efficient allocation of resources, and they would also ensure that development is not fragmented. Functional assignment should follow the rule of subsidiarity, and a strong justification should be presented for why the functions should be retained on higher levels (Sivaramakrishnan, 2022).

Digital Governance and Technology Integration

Digital technologies can be used to revolutionize the way PRI is governed, transparent, and services are delivered. The e-Gram Swaraj portal was introduced in 2020 with the intention of establishing a single platform to plan, account, and monitor the activities of the Panchayat. Through integration with the GeM (Government e-Marketplace) portal, procurement can be seen in a transparent manner, and the DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) mechanisms limit intermediation on welfare delivery. To make this possible, however, it demands a significant amount of investment in digital infrastructure, the capacity building of digital literacy, and the ease of use of application design that can meet the needs of different linguistic and educational backgrounds (Kumar and Sharma, 2023).

Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) are becoming more evidence-based in their planning with the use of Geographic Information Systems and remote sensing data. Through mobile applications, citizens can engage, complain, and socially audit. The COVID-19 pandemic increased the rate of adoption of digital technologies, with PRIs using technology to track cases, coordinate the provision of relief, and hold virtual meetings. To maintain and grow such initiatives, special technical support is needed, frequent upgrades of the system, and cybercrime to ensure that sensitive data is not tampered with (Bhatia, 2022).

Social Accountability and Mechanisms of Participation

It is important to enhance social accountability structures to be responsive and effective in PRI governance. The basic institutions of participatory democracy are Gram Sabhas, the general assemblies of village voters, which are not very effective. Routine, high-profile Gram Sabha conferences that have substantial agendas that include budget approvals, scheme pursuits, and social audits can transform these forums into something more than a formal alien into a real place of democratic discussion and control (Aiyar & Mehta, 2021).

In Andhra Pradesh, social audits were the first accountability instrument, later mainstreamed by the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, and offer strong instruments of accountability, allowing citizens to audit how the government uses its money and implements its programs. Accountability ecosystems would be improved by broadening the social audit requirements on development schemes, through support institutions such as Social Audit Units, and whistleblower security. Panchayat levels need to be successfully operationalized with Right to Information



mechanisms, and an active release of important information and a responsive system of grievance redressal (Ghosh, 2020).

The Panchayat Raj Institutions in India on the way to 2047 Combining PRIs and National Development Vision

India is already planning the way forward in the developmental process leading to 2047, and PRIs need to be the ones at the frontline to convert the dream plans into realities. In any case, the vision of a developed India, Viksit Bharat, inclusive growth, sustainable development, and improved quality of life is essentially premised on strong institutions of local governance that are responsive, participative, and efficient in-service delivery. PRIs, as the nearest state-citizen contact, are in a better position to tailor the national programs to local situations, mobilize community resources, and leave no one behind (NITI Aayog, 2023).

The localization agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) requires the involvement of PRI in various aspects. PRIs can also move towards the achievement of the goals regarding poverty, hunger, health, education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, sustainable energy, and climate action, based on localized interventions to meet the needs and dreams of communities. The Village Development Plans have to include the SDG targets, and there should be monitoring systems where the progress should be followed by the participation of citizens and civil society organizations (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2022).

Constructing Firm Village Economies

The idea of the self-reliant India (atmanirbhar Bharat) vision is strongly felt at the village level, where PRIs are able to facilitate the local economic growth with the intervention strategies. Encouraging village industries, making market contacts on agricultural produce, encouraging skill development programs, and providing rural job opportunities are important PRI functions. Rural industrial parks, common facilities centers serving artisans and craftspersons, and the One District One Product initiative are channels to sustainable livelihoods in the rural areas (Choudhury, 2022).

Local planning and implementation of climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies need PRIs to play important roles. Community-level mobilisation and action are required to conserve water using traditional water harvesting methods, promoting renewable energy, sustainable farming, biodiversity protection, and mitigating against catastrophes. With the relevant resources and technical assistance, PRIs will be able to turn villages into ecological models and climate resilience (Ranjan and Das, 2021).

The Strengthening Roadmap of Institutions

The 2047 vision would have to be met by a multi-dimensional PRIs institutional strengthening roadmap. First, constitutional and legal changes must include the revision of Article 243G, whereby devolution should be mandatory instead of permissive, and timelines developed to transfer functions and mechanisms created to intervene by the central government in situations where the state remains non-compliant. Second, financial reforms will need to strengthen the powers of the PRI to raise revenues, raise the amount of untied grants in Finance Commission distributions, and provide predictable and timely flows of funds (Oommen, 2023).



Third, systematic capacity building by specific institutions such as the National Institute of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) and State Institutes of Rural Development should be stepped up, and inclusive training modules on governance, finance, technology, and sector development should be taken. Fourth, the fragmentation would be minimized, and efficiency would be increased by rationalization of parallel bodies and convergence of schemes via PRI platforms. Fifth, gender-responsive governance systems should go beyond representation by numbers to make a decision that is substantive and that women representatives play a role during decision-making procedures (Kudva&Misra, 2022).

Conclusion

The Panchayat Raj Institutions constitute the Indian audacious experiment in the field of democratic decentralization, which has changed the rural governance setting in the last three decades radically. The vision of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment enabled local self-government, although it is partially fulfilled, and faces continuous challenges that cover financial limits, capacity crunch, administrative disintegration, and partial devolution. But the accomplishments are notable, more than 3 million elected representatives, more social inclusiveness than ever before with the use of reservations, and demonstrated ability to conduct responsive governance where properly empowered. With India moving towards 2047, there is a need to further empower PRIs because of the quest to enhance governance, but also to provide the necessary grounds for inclusive, sustainable, and participatory development. The list of reforms that is presented includes the total devolution, the increase of fiscal independence, the introduction of digitalization, the development of capacity, and the social responsibility, which form the components of a unified strategy of strengthening. To achieve success, both central and state governments should be committed to long-term political action, citizens must be actively involved, and innovations in institutions that adjust to the changing developmental problems are necessary.

The road to come dictates the need to appreciate the fact that PRIs are not stapling bodies but democratic entities that reflect constitutional principles of self-governance, participation, and local autonomy. In the realization of the vision of village republics of the greater Gandhiji and the realization of the 2047 developmental aspirations requires the genuine empowerment of Panchayats with the necessary authority, resources, and capabilities. Such transformative reforms alone will enable the institutions of grassroots democracy in India to realize their full potential as tools of inclusive development as well as participatory governance, and make the fruits of development reach the last mile and the last man.

As the experience of states such as Kerala, Karnataka, and Maharashtra proves, PRIs can bring change to the development and governance where there is political will and systematic reforms are taken. The main issue is to scale these achievements on the nationwide level and put approaches to various state conditions into perspective. Now that India is at this critical point, the enhancement of Panchayat Raj Institutions is not only a democratic requirement but also a development agenda to create the inclusive, resilient, and prosperous nation it is hoped will be the case in 2047.

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BRIDGING DIGITAL DIVIDE AND ECOLOGICAL WISDOM: ICT-ENABLED NATURAL RESOURCE GOVERNANCE AND LIVELIHOOD TRANSFORMATION OF LAMBADA WOMEN IN TELANGANA

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Abstract

The paper discusses the nexus of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) adoption and indigenous ecological knowledge of Lambada women in Telangana, India, in terms of natural resource governance and livelihood transformation. The Lambada community, which is socio-economically marginalized and traditionally reliant on forests, has the two-fold problems of environmental degradation and digital marginalization. In a mixed-methods report of primary survey (n=450) in five districts and secondary data of government sources, this study demonstrates how specific ICT interventions such as mobile-based forest produces pricing systems, digital literacy programs, and e-governance platforms have helped the market to be accessed, collective bargaining power to be strengthened, and the participatory management of resources. The results show that 67% of Lambada women who underwent ICT training stated an increase in income (40-60%), and the digital platform decreased intermediary exploitation (35). Scalability is, however, hampered by infrastructural shortcomings, gender-related obstacles, and cultural restraints. The paper also proves that ICT integration must be culturally sensitive, maintain traditional ecological knowledge, and ensure the digital infrastructure of successful integration. This study will add to existing literature on gender, technology, and sustainable development by emphasizing how low-income indigenous women can use digital technologies to support their economic empowerment and remain ecological stewards of the land, with policy implications of inclusive digital change in tribal India.

Keywords: *Digital divide, Lambada women, ICT governance, natural resource management, livelihood transformation, indigenous knowledge, tribal empowerment, Telangana, gender and technology, sustainable development.*

Introduction

The digital revolution has literally changed the system of governance and economic processes in all parts of the world, but its advantages are not evenly distributed (van Dijk, 2020). The indigenous and tribal people, especially women, experience further disadvantage in regard to access to Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), which results in a digital divide of a second order (Antonio & Tuffley, 2014). The difference is particularly evident in communities that depend on forests whose traditional livelihoods conflict with emerging, transforming technological environments.

There are about 104 million tribals in India (Census of India, 2011). The case of Lambada, the community of one of the biggest Scheduled Tribes in India, Telangana, with a population of more than 5 million, is a good argument in favor of studying the digital-ecological nexus. The Lambada women, formerly semi-nomadic and forest-dependent, are the main collectors of non-timber forest products (NTFPs), and holders of ethnobotanical knowledge, as well as dictating food security at home. Nonetheless, they have systemic obstacles such as high illiteracy levels (42% versus 66% state



average), low levels of land ownership, oppressive market middlemen, and a lack of formal decision-making (Government of Telangana, 2020).

The digital governance efforts of Telangana, such as the Haritha Haram and digital literacy missions of the tribal welfare department, have made the state a testbed of technology-based rural development (Planning Department, Government of Telangana, 2021). The three research questions to be answered in this paper are: (1) How has ICT intervention promoted market access and income generation among Lambada women? (2) How is digital literacy connected to taking part in the governance of natural resources? (3) What are the obstacles that define the effectiveness of ICT adoption?

2. Literature Review

Digital divide involves various aspects that are not just relationships with technology, like skills, patterns of use, and physical results (van Deursen and Helsper, 2015). In the case of indigenous communities, this gap is added to the historical marginalization, geographic remoteness, and cultural-linguistic barriers (Duarte, 2017). Research indicates that tribal communities have distinct issues of their own- just 23 percent of tribal families in central India own smartphones as opposed to 58 percent of non-tribal families (Rajesh et al., 2019). Gender cuts right across: tribal literacy is 14-18 percentage points lower than tribal men (NITI Aayog, 2018).

ICTs have been used in governance of the environment, where they have been used in monitoring forests, community-based conservation, and governance of the supply chain (Pratihast et al., 2013). The Van Dhan Vikas Yojana of India incorporates the digital purchase of NTFP (Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2018). Kumar and Singh (2020) show that the mobile-based pricing system raised the tribal incomes by 25-40 percent, but the gains were not equally distributed across gender.

Feminist technology studies underscore the fact that digital technology entails the entrenchment and reproduction of existing power relations (Wajeman, 2010). Effective ICT interventions among the indigenous women must be culturally relevant to design and incorporate their traditional knowledge systems instead of replacing their traditional knowledge systems (Veeraraghavan et al., 2007). The Lambada women have a great deal of traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) when it comes to forest species, sustainable harvesting, and medicinal plants (Subbarayudu & Rao, 2016).

A study of Lambada women in particular shows that they are the core of the economy because they engage in NTFP collection, which has its own challenges, such as freedom of movement and exposure to exploitative traders (Prasad & Pragathi, 2017). There is sparse literature about meeting digital divides, the experiences of indigenous women, and the interaction between digital tools and the traditional knowledge system.

3. Research Methodology

This research has used a mixed-methods approach where a quantitative survey is used together with qualitative interviews and focus groups (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018). The study was carried out in five selected districts, namely, Adilabad, Warangal, Khammam, Bhadrachalam, and Mahabubabad, with the population of Lambada, forest covers, the presence of ICT programs, and the geographic diversity as the selection criteria.



Multi-stage stratified random sampling was used to find 450 Lambada women between 18-65 who participated in NTFP collection. Also, 24 in-depth interviews with leaders of SHG, Van Dhan managers, and officials, as well as 8 focus groups, were held. Structured questionnaires using the Lambadi language were used to collect quantitative data regarding demographics, NTFP activities, ICT access/usage, digital literacy, income, market access, and participation in governance. Qualitative data were used to investigate lived experience, customary ways, and obstacles.

Dependent variables were: (1) NTFP income, (2) quality of market access, and (3) governance participation. Independent variables: ICT intervention exposure, (2) digital literacy, (1) ICT access. Control variables: Age, education, household size, land ownership, SHG membership. The quantitative analysis of the data was performed with the help of SPSS 26.0 and Stata 15, whereas the qualitative thematic analysis was implemented with NVivo 12. Informed consent was collected with the ethical approval obtained in the Lambadi language.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Socio-Economic and Digital Profile

Table 1: Socio-Economic and Digital Profile (N=450)

| Characteristic | Category | n (%) |
|------------------|--------------------------|-------------|
| Education | Illiterate | 189 (42.0%) |
| | Primary | 143 (31.8%) |
| | Secondary+ | 118 (26.2%) |
| Household Income | <₹5,000/month | 167 (37.1%) |
| | ₹5,000-10,000 | 201 (44.7%) |
| | >₹10,000 | 82 (18.2%) |
| Phone Ownership | Owns a basic phone | 176 (39.1%) |
| | Family smartphone access | 198 (44.0%) |
| | No access | 76 (16.9%) |
| Digital Literacy | None | 203 (45.1%) |
| | Basic | 147 (32.7%) |
| | Intermediate+ | 100 (22.2%) |
| SHG Membership | Yes | 312 (69.3%) |

Source: Author's primary survey, 2022-23

The statistics indicate an illiteracy rate of 42 percent, which is massive compared to the 66 percent female literacy in Telangana. The ownership of phones amongst them is only 39.1% (mostly basic), with 44% having access to smartphones via family members and thus becoming dependent. The level of digital literacy is quite worrisome: 45.1% of people have no digital skills. Positively, 69.3 percent are Self-Help Groups, which are vital mechanisms of digital interventions.



4.2 ICT Interventions and Impacts

Table 2: ICT Programs and Participation

| Program | Key Component | Participation | Awareness |
|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------|
| Van Dhan Vikas Kendra | Mobile pricing app | 147 (32.7%) | 68.2% |
| MGNREGA Mobile App | Payment tracking | 178 (39.6%) | 71.3% |
| Tribal Digital Literacy | Smartphone training | 134 (29.8%) | 61.1% |
| e-Panchayat Portal | Online grievance | 67 (14.9%) | 43.8% |

Source: Primary survey and government records

The highest participation (39.6) is observed in MGNREGA because of the criticality of livelihood. There is a large gap between awareness and participation: 68.2% are aware of Van Dhan, but only 32.7% participate, which suggests that there are obstacles that extend beyond information: lack of a smartphone, inability to navigate, insufficient training, language interfaces (Telugu/English, not Lambadi), and distance to centres (average of 8-12km).

Table 3: Income and Market Access: ICT Users vs. Non-Users

| Indicator | ICT Users (n=187) | Non-Users (n=263) | Difference |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------|
| Mean monthly NTFP income (₹) | 3,847 | 2,456 | +56.6%*** |
| Knowledge of market price | 82.4% | 34.2% | +48.2pp*** |
| Dependence on a single trader | 28.3% | 67.7% | -39.4pp*** |
| Direct market access | 64.2% | 18.3% | +45.9pp*** |
| Collective bargaining | 71.1% | 29.3% | +41.8pp*** |

*Note: ** $p < 0.001$; pp=percentage points

The difference in monthly earnings by ICT users (56.6) is quite significant (₹3,847 vs. ₹2,456). The dependence of single traders reduces by 67.7% to 28.3%. The conventional NTFP markets are based on exploitative relationships where traders give advance credit, in a way that ties collectors to less than market prices. This dependency is broken by mobile price information and can be alternatively accessed by buyers. One of the respondents said: Previously, the trader offered us any price. Now I check the Van Dhan app. Last month, he paid 40/kg on tamarind; the application indicated ₹65. I went to Van Dhan Kendra and received ₹62 INR.

4.2 Digital Literacy and Empowerment

Table 4: Digital Literacy Training Impact

| Outcome | Training Recipients (n=134) | Non-Recipients (n=316) | Difference |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|------------|
| Income increase | 52.3% | 18.7% | +33.6pp*** |
| Gram Sabha attendance | 68.7% | 34.2% | +34.5pp*** |
| Forest Rights Committee participation | 41.8% | 12.3% | +29.5pp*** |
| Confidence in negotiation (1-5 scale) | 3.8 | 2.1 | +1.7*** |
| Decision-making autonomy (1-5 scale) | 3.6 | 2.4 | +1.2*** |

*Note: ** $p < 0.001$



The results of digital literacy training have been seen to have wide effects in the economic, social, and psychological aspects. Recipients of training increase their income by 52.3 percent as compared to 18.7 percent of non-recipients. The effects of training are not limited to economics: the attendance at Gram Sabha increases twofold (68.7% vs. 34.2). The participation of the Forest Rights Committee (which is very important in the management of the resources) is much greater (41.8% vs. 12.3%). Qualitative evidence indicates this is caused by the inclusion in the programs of Forest Rights Act content in addition to technical skills. One of them was a trainer who noted: It was not enough to teach how to press the button. Women should have recognized the reasons why they should use technology and how it relates to their rights.

4.4 Natural Resource Governance

Table 5: ICT and Governance Participation

| Governance Mechanism | ICT Users | Non-Users | Difference |
|----------------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|
| Forest Rights Committee | 41.2% | 11.0% | +30.2pp*** |
| NTFP pricing committees | 37.4% | 8.0% | +29.4pp*** |
| Gram Sabha (forest agenda) | 71.7% | 27.4% | +44.3pp*** |

*Note: ** $p < 0.001$

There is a close relationship between the adoption of ICT and participation in governance. Three avenues were formed: (1) Information Access- WhatsApp groups will spread meeting schedules to women; (2) Evidence Documentation- smartphone cameras will document forest conditions, illegal acts, and will allow generating credible data; (3) Networking- mobile communication allows organizing village coordination around collective representation.

Nevertheless, its quality of participation is mediocre (3.1-3.8 on 5-point scales), meaning that being present does not necessarily mean that an individual has power. There are still structural barriers: Telugu, not Lambadi, meetings, technical discussions that cannot be heard by illiterate women, and the rule of patriarchy that delegitimizes the voices of women. According to one of the committee members: I am able to attend meetings now due to WhatsApp messages. However, when I talk, the forest officers and male members do not take it seriously. The phone assists me in arriving, but it cannot compel them to respect our knowledge.

4.5 Traditional Ecological Knowledge

Table 6: TEK and ICT Adoption

| TEK Indicator | ICT Users | Non-Users | Correlation |
|------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|
| Forest species identified | 51.2 | 44.9 | +0.21** |
| Medicinal plant knowledge | 26.8 | 21.5 | +0.28*** |
| TEK transmission to children (1-5) | 3.4 | 2.6 | +0.26*** |

*Note: ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$



The use of ICT and involvement of governance are closely related. Three paths were created: (1) Information Access- WhatsApp groups will share meeting schedules with women; (2) Evidence Documentation- smartphone cameras will record the state of forests, criminal activity, and will enable generating credible data; (3) Networking- mobile communication will help to organize the village coordination around collective representation.

However, it has a mediocre quality of participation (3.1-3.8 on a 0-5-point scale), which implies that attendance does not imply one has power. Structural barriers still exist: not Lambadi, but Telugu, meetings, technical dialogues, which cannot be comprehended by illiterate women, the rule of patriarchy, delegitimizing the voice of women. One of the committee members asserts: It is now possible to attend meetings because of WhatsApp messages. Nevertheless, the forest officers and male members do not consider it seriously when I talk. The phone can help me get to the place, but it cannot force them to consider our knowledge.

4.6 Barriers to ICT Adoption

Table 7: Barriers to ICT Adoption

| Barrier Category | Specific Barrier | Prevalence | Severity (1-5) |
|------------------|----------------------------|------------|----------------|
| Infrastructure | No network coverage | 34.7% | 4.8 |
| | Network disruption | 62.4% | 4.2 |
| | No electricity | 28.2% | 4.5 |
| Economic | Cannot afford a smartphone | 58.4% | 4.7 |
| | Cannot afford data | 64.9% | 4.3 |
| Capability | Illiteracy | 74.0% | 4.6 |
| | Language barriers | 67.6% | 4.4 |
| Sociocultural | Family controls phone | 48.9% | 4.0 |
| | Mobility restrictions | 36.4% | 3.6 |

The problem of infrastructure is dire: 34.7% do not have network coverage, 62.4% have frequent disruptions, and 28.2% do not have electricity to charge. The barriers to the economy are immense: 58.4% cannot afford smartphones, and 64.9% cannot afford data. The capability barriers consist of 74.0% illiterate and 67.6% have language barriers (apps not in Lambadi). Sociocultural barriers comprise 48.9% that are controlled by their family on the use of phones, restricting them from making economic transactions independently. Such obstacles need complex interventions other than the provision of technology.

5. Policy Recommendations

In light of the findings, it can be recommended to implement several recommendations:

Infrastructure Development: Focus on the development of mobile network and stable electricity in tribal regions with specific investment in telecommunications infrastructure and solar charging stations.

Affordable Access: Government schemes can offer affordable smartphones and free /low-cost data plans to tribal women. Make use of the existing SHG networks to distribute the devices.



Culturally Appropriate Design: Design applications in the Lambadi language with voice-based interfaces to help illiterate users. Include the use of visuals that will increase the Lambada cultural aesthetics. Co-design in collaboration with members of the community.

Multifaceted Training: In addition to the technical skills of digital literacy, consider the rights awareness, the process of governance, and the financial literacy. Apply peer-to-peer learning models to trained Lambada women as facilitators. Make sure that there is adequate time (at least 40 hours) and rehabilitation.

TEK Integration: TEK platforms that record, authenticate, and relay traditional ecological knowledge and market information. Design a digital herbarium in co-design with knowledge holders among the elder women.

Eliminate Gender Barriers: Encourage women to own their phones one by one as opposed to sharing them with their families. Implement community awareness campaigns that will focus on socio-cultural barriers to the use of technology by women and the ability to move freely.

Institutional Strengthening: SHGs and Van Dhan Kendras: Strengthen them to use them as a delivery mechanism. Assure effective presence of women in governance through holding meetings in an accessible language, capacity building of women to engage in technical discussions, and through the use of quotas in decision-making positions.

Monitoring and Evaluation: Develop gender-disaggregated systems of monitoring that not only focus on access but also on quality of usage and outcomes of empowerment. Occurring participatory assessments with beneficiary communities.

6. Conclusion

This study illustrates that ICT-based interventions can go a long way in improving livelihoods and political participation by the vulnerable indigenous women, when properly designed and executed. Women in ICT access in Lambada had 56.6 percent more income, had intermediary exploitation which was cut by 35 percent, and engaged in natural resource governance in large proportions. Digital literacy education brought about multidimensional empowerment in the economic, social, and psychological spheres.

Importantly, the results undermine beliefs in the role of technology in sidelining the use of knowledge that was previously possessed by the community. The adoption of technology in ICT was positively related to the retention and transmission of traditional ecological knowledge when indigenous knowledge systems were explicitly valued as a part of interventions. This indicates that there are possibilities of the existence of synergically related digital tools with traditional practices as opposed to inevitable displacement.

Nonetheless, there are still serious obstacles. The adoption and effectiveness are restricted by infrastructure shortages, financial limitations, skill shortages, and sociocultural barriers. The digital divide among the indigenous women is a reproduction of the existing structural disparities, and the solution would require an all-around intervention that goes beyond the provision of technology, such as infrastructure, affordability, building capabilities, and transforming sociocultural aspects, and not just technology.

The Lambada case provides more general lessons on the inclusive digital transformation in the indigenous environment around the world. It takes success: culturally sensitive design to accommodate lingo-aesthetic preferences; integration instead of substitution of traditional knowledge; consideration of gender-specific obstacles such as mediated access and mobility limitations; institutional structures such as SHGs to take collective action, and overcoming underlying infrastructure and economic barriers.

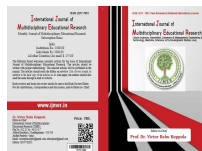


The future studies may focus on the sustainability of ICT interventions in the long run, intergenerational aspects of technology use, the process of traditional knowledge transfer, and the comparison between different tribal groups. With India making ambitious goals of digital governance, to make these changes a strength, not an additional marginalization of the indigenous women, a policy commitment has to last, resources have to be allocated, and the tribal populations should be involved in the design and implementation.

The convergence of digital technology and traditional ecological wisdom is not a zero-sum trade-off, but it can be seen as a chance to develop hybrid knowledge, which will allow securing economic stability and preserving cultural integrity and environmental responsibility. This potential requires policymakers, developers of technologies, and civil society entities to make indigenous women themselves the central figures when it comes to defining digital futures.

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FROM MARGINS TO MAINSTREAM: WOMEN'S HISTORICAL JOURNEY AND FUTURE ROLE IN INDIA'S SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT VISION @2047

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Abstract

The active involvement of the women who are almost half of the population is required in the struggle of India to achieve sustainable development by 2047, the centenary of independence. This paper will discuss the historical path that women took in Indian society in their progression to the status of marginalization to mainstream involvement in development processes. The study uses an extensive review of socio-economic variables, policy models, and empirical data to trace how women have been transformed over the decades from passive beneficiaries of development initiatives to change agents. The study addresses such crucial aspects as education, economic engagement, political representation, health outcomes, and leadership in sustainable development projects. Based on the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework and the national development agenda in India, the paper reveals gender gaps that still persist, although tremendous achievements have been made in the empowerment of women. The paper concludes that the implementation of Vision 2047 in India will entail transformative policies that will guarantee full involvement of women in the economic, social, and political domains, with strong policies, institutional, and attitudinal changes in society.

Keywords: Women empowerment, Sustainable development, Gender equality, Vision 2047, India development, Women leadership, Gender mainstreaming, SDGs, Economic participation, Social inclusion.

1. Introduction

In 2047, India will celebrate a historic occasion, the 100th anniversary of its independence. With the country looking forward to being a developed country by this milestone year, the contribution of women towards the realization of this dream cannot be overestimated. Women, who form around 48.4% of the population of India, according to the 2021 Census, are not just half of the demographic dividend, but the embodiment of the transforming potential of sustainable and inclusive development (Office of Registrar General & Census Commissioner, 2021).

The process of Indian women coming out of the marginalization of the past and into the mainstream of today has been characterized by long struggles, small steps of victory, and constant challenges. Since women were restricted to domestic life, where access to education and economic opportunities were limited in the pre-independence period, women have, over time, become major participants in the socio-economic life of India. Nevertheless, even with constitutional promises of equality and a host of policies intervening in the country in the 7 decades of independence, gender gaps still exist in various areas of development.

The concept of sustainable development, as formulated by the United Nations in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, focuses on the combined development of the economic, social, and



environmental aspects. The equality of genders and the empowerment of women represent not only a specific goal (SDG 5) but also a major facilitator toward the realization of all other 17 Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations, 2015). In the case of India, it will be important to make its Vision 2047 congruent with the values of sustainable development by considering gender inequalities systemically and using the agency of women as a driver of transformation.

This paper will analyze how the status of women in India has evolved with time, measure up against modern indicators of women's involvement in the development process, policy frameworks, interventions, and identify strategic pathways of ensuring that women will be at the center stage of the sustainable development vision of India in 2047. The study builds on the secondary data published by the government, international development agencies, academic sources, and empirical research to give a detailed analysis of women's movement into the mainstream.

2. Historical Context: From Marginalization to Recognition

2.1 Pre-Independence Era: Systematic Exclusion

Women in pre-independent India were marked by systematic social, economic, and political exclusion. According to colonial census information at the start of the 20th century, the literacy level among women was very low, with only 0.6 percent of women being literate in 1901 as opposed to 9.8 percent of men (Chanana, 2001). Child marriage, banning of widow remarriage, sati, purdah system, and restricted property rights ranked women below their male counterparts in the patriarchal systems.

But this was also the era of the development of reform movements and women's activism. Women's education and rights were advocated by social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule. The independence struggle, and women such as Sarojini Naidu, Kasturba Gandhi, and Kamala Nehru, who actively took part in the nationalist movements, gave the women's movement impetus, and thus the women's population was no longer restricted to the domestic sphere.

2.2 Post-Independence: Policy Development and Constitutional Pledges.

Gender equality was incorporated in the Indian Constitution when it was adopted in 1950. Articles 14, 15, 16, and 39 provide equality before the law, ban discrimination based on sex, provide equal opportunities, and provide directions to the state to provide equal pay to equal work. Article 15(3) of the Constitution also made special provisions concerning women and children, which included affirmative action: it was noted that women and children had to be provided with special consideration due to their historical disadvantage (Constitution of India, 1950).

Planning of development in the post-independence period initially had a welfare approach to women, where women were mostly considered in terms of recipients rather than taking part. First Five-Year Plan (1951-56) is one of the strategies that focused on the welfare of women by presenting health and educational programs. But this method slowly changed to the developmental role of women. The Third Five-Year Plan (1961-66) had realized the role played by women in economic development, and the Fifth Plan (1974-79) was the first to mention that women were developed (Government of India, Planning Commission, various years).

A paradigm shift was realized with the release of the report on the status of women in India, which was released in 1974, named Towards Equality, which is a compilation of the long-term gender



inequalities no matter of the provisions of the constitution. This saw the Sixth Five-Year Plan (1980-85) take a development approach that viewed women as development partners. This point of view was further strengthened by the National Policy of the Empowerment of Women, 2001, which highlighted the role of the agency, autonomy, and mainstreaming gender issues of women in all sectors (Government of India, Ministry of Women and Child Development, 2001).

3. Contemporary Status: Progress and Persistent Gaps

3.1 Education: Expanding Access with Quality Concerns

Education is one of the greatest areas of development in women's development. There has been a high increment in the female literacy rates to 70.3% in 2021, as opposed to the 8.6% in 1951, but still, there remains a 12.9 percentage point difference with male literacy rates being 83.2% (Government of India, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, 2022). Gender Parity Index (GPI) in primary education is 1.03, which means parity and even a slight advantage to girls, whereas in secondary education, the Parity Index is 1.01, which is a significant evolution in access to education.

Nonetheless, there are still large differences between the states, urban and rural regions, and socio-economic groups. Table 1 gives the important education indicators by gender disaggregated, and this shows both the success and still existing problems.

Table 1:
Gender-Disaggregated Educational Indicators in India

| Indicator | Male | Female |
|--|--------|--------|
| Literacy Rate (2021) | 83.2% | 70.3% |
| Gross Enrolment Ratio - Primary (2020-21) | 105.4% | 108.9% |
| Gross Enrolment Ratio - Secondary (2020-21) | 78.6% | 79.4% |
| Gross Enrolment Ratio - Higher Education (2020-21) | 27.3% | 28.4% |
| Dropout Rate - Secondary (2019-20) | 16.8% | 17.3% |

Source: Ministry of Education (2022), Unified District Information System for Education Plus (UDISE+)

3.2 Economic Participation: Paradox of Growth

The scenario of women in the economic life of India is paradoxical. Although there has been an increase in education and a drop in fertility rates, the level of female labor force participation decreased from 2011-12 (31.2) to 2019-20 (25.1) and then increased to 32.8 in 2022-23 (Periodic Labour Force Survey, National Statistical Office, 2023). This U-shaped design is an indication of complicated interaction among education, social norms, structural change, and measurement problems.

Less than 13 percent of the agricultural land is owned by women, who are more than 70 percent of the agricultural workforce, which makes the situation of asset ownership and control a problem (NITI Aayog, 2022). Women are more vulnerable in the informal sector, where they mainly form the majority of the workforce, with the vulnerabilities being wage disparities, absence of social security, and having precarious working conditions. The female wage disparity remains around 19 per cent, and women receive lower incomes than men for doing similar jobs (International Labour Organization, 2021).



Table 2 displays important economic indicators that reveal the gender inequality in economic participation and performance.

Table 2:
Gender Gaps in Economic Participation and Outcomes

| Indicator | Value/Gap |
|--|-----------|
| Female Labour Force Participation Rate (2022-23) | 32.8% |
| Male Labour Force Participation Rate (2022-23) | 77.2% |
| Gender Wage Gap | 19% |
| Women-owned Enterprises (% of total MSMEs) | 20.4% |
| Women in Informal Employment (% of female workers) | 95.8% |
| Women's Ownership of Agricultural Land | 12.8% |

Source: Periodic Labour Force Survey (2023); ILO (2021); NITI Aayog (2022)

3.3 Political Representation: Constitutional Provisions and Ground Realities

One of the dimensions of women's development is political empowerment. The introduction of a 33% quota of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies under the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (1992-93) is a historic move that introduced a total of 1.4 million women into the field of electoral local governance (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2022). This silent revolution has proved the ability of women in governance as well as in making decisions at the grassroots levels.

Nevertheless, the ratio of women in the superior ranks of political arrangements is still too low. Women make up just 14.4% of the members of the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament), as of the 2019 elections, despite the Women's Reservation Bill having passed in 2023, which will mean women will be guaranteed 33% seats in both Parliament and state legislatures when enacted. On the state level, women are represented in legislative assemblies at an average of 9 percent, with vast disparities between states (Election Commission of India, 2022).

3.4 Health and Well-being: Improvements with Continued Concerns

There is a significant improvement in the health outcomes of women indicated by health indicators. Maternal Mortality Ratio has decreased to 97 in 201820 after reaching 212 per 100,000 live births in 2007 09, and is approaching the SDG target of 70 (Sample Registration System, Office of Registrar General, 2020). The percentage of deliveries in institutions has gone up to 88.6, whereas coverage of full antenatal care has gone up to 58.1% (National Family Health Survey-5, 2019-21).

However, problems still exist. Nutritional deficiencies are revealed in that 57% of women between the ages of 15-49 years are infected with anemia. Although the sex ratio at birth is improving, it continues to show a son preference at 929 females per 1000 males (Census 2021). Child marriage is on the decrease, but still 23.3% of women aged 20-24 years were married before 18, which infringes on the rights and shifts the disadvantages to the next generation (NFHS-5, 2019-21).



4. Women as Agents of Sustainable Development

4.1 Environmental Stewardship and Climate Action

The connection of women with the natural resources and especially in rural settings, makes them a very significant player in the sustainability of the environment. The Chipko movement, which was started in the 1970s by rural women as a way of conserving forests, is one of the examples to show the leadership of women in the environment. It is demonstrated through current evidence that women-led Self-Help Groups (SHGs) are actively involved in the watershed management, afforestation, and biodiversity conservation programs in India (NABARD, 2021).

Women are also the most impacted by climate change because of their already weak areas, but they have priceless traditional knowledge and adaptation techniques. It has been shown that the involvement of women in the management of natural resources results in the achievement of more positive conservation results and a more sustainable approach (Agarwal, 2010). With this realization, the National Action Plan on Climate Change highlights gender responsive climate policies, but gaps in their implementation are noteworthy.

4.2 Economic Sustainability Through Women's Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship by women has proved to be a major economic sustenance. National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) has mobilized 90 million rural women into 8.5 million SHGs to enable them to have a community platform of economic activities, financial inclusion, and social empowerment (Ministry of Rural Development, 2023). These organizations show that when women are given resources and institutional support can create local economic development and at the same time sustainable practices.

Programs such as MUDRA (Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency) have given loans to women entrepreneurs in the tune of billions, and Stand-Up India takes the form of bank loans given to SC/ST and women entrepreneurs. It has been proven that women entrepreneurs have more positive loan repayment rates, invest more in household welfare, and have more sustainable business practices than their male counterparts (World Bank, 2020). Nevertheless, unrelenting obstacles such as scarcity of access to formal credit, markets, technology, and social restrictions are still impeding the full entrepreneurial potential of women.

4.3 Social Sustainability: Education, Health, and Community Development

Studies have always shown that the empowerment of women has multiplier impacts on the social development indicators. Educated women are better placed to provide education to children, embrace healthy behaviors, and postpone marriage and pregnancy intervals. The income and the power of choices made by women positively relate to the household spending on education and health and generate intergenerational gains (Sen, 1999).

The primary healthcare system of India is comprised of community health workers who are mostly women. The workers of ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activists), with an exceeding number of one million workers, are a good example of women's contribution towards delivering healthcare and improving the community. On the same note, the role of women in the local governance in Panchayati



Raj Institutions has resulted in more investments in the provision of social amenities such as water, sanitation, and education (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004).

5. Policy Framework and Strategic Initiatives

5.1 Legislative and Constitutional Framework

The gender equality legal framework of India includes the constitutional language, legislation, as well as policy principles. Some of the legislation is: The Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act (2005), Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013), and amendments to rape laws that have enhanced deterrence. The amendment of the Hindu Succession Act of 2005 gave daughters the same equal right of inheritance, in the area of property rights, which is a matter of discrimination.

With the newly enacted Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women Reservation Bill 2023), which requires a 33% reservation of women in both Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies, the issue of political empowerment is a historic commitment towards women. Nonetheless, proper implementation, issues of proxy representation, and substantive participation, other than just the presence in numbers, continue to be crucial issues.

5.2 Flagship Schemes and Programs

Several flagship programmes aim at the development of women in various sectors. Beti Padhao Beti Bachao deals with falling sex ratios of children and the education of girls. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana is a maternity benefit. Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana helps to save the money of girl children. SABLA (Scheme for Adolescent Girls) is concerned with the nutritional needs and life skills of adolescent girls.

Financial inclusion programs, such as Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, have been able to include millions of women into formal banking, 55.2 percent of which are run by women (Government of India, 2023). Mission Shakti, introduced in 2021, is built around several schemes of women's safety, security, and empowerment on a unified platform, which is focused on convergence and result-based implementation.

5.3 Gender Budgeting and Mainstreaming

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6. Vision 2047: Strategic Pathways for Women's Central Role

6.1 Economic Transformation: Closing Gender Gaps in Work and Assets

To support Vision 2047, there is a need to transform and empower women to improve their contribution to the economy. Labor force participation, which is currently at 45 percent, should be boosted to 50 percent by 2047 to be at the regional level, and this would contribute to the GDP of India to the tune of 770 billion dollars (McKinsey Global Institute, 2018). This requires dealing with limitations such as care workloads that are not paid, work discrimination, and lack of accessibility to productive resources.

The strategic interventions should entail: increasing quality affordable childcare facilities; providing flexible workplaces and parental leave policies; equal pay to equal work through effective monitoring and enforcement; women's access to credit, land, technology, and markets; women's involvement in high growth sectors such as STEM, manufacturing and services; and enhancement of social protection systems to include informal sector workers of women.

6.2 Education for the Fourth Industrial Revolution

The Fourth Industrial Revolution brings about opportunities and threats to gender equality. To make women participate in emerging technologies, like artificial intelligence, data science, renewable energy, biotechnology, and others, it will take specific measures at the school level to the higher education level. It is necessary to address the disparities in STEM education, offer digital literacy and skills training, motivate women in research and innovation, and remove stereotypes that restrict career options.

The vision 2047 should project women forming at least 50% of the STEM graduates and professionals. This needs a systematic transformation of curriculum, pedagogy, career counseling, workplace policy, and attitude at the societal level. Women can be given a chance to engage in frontier technologies that will ultimately form future economies through the provisions of scholarships, mentorship programs, role model visibility, and institutional support.

6.3 Political Leadership and Governance

The adoption of the 33% women's reservation in Parliament and the state legislature is a significant move, and Vision 2047 should strive to achieve an equal representation of women in all the political tiers. The development of women's leadership in politics has to be intervened in holistically: political party reforms to allow women contestants other than reserved seats; capacity building strategies of women political leaders; ending violence against women in politics; substantive participation by women, other than tokenism; and their representation in policy-making, bureaucracy, judiciary, and corporate boards.

Scandinavian countries have shown that representation in politics of equal gender creates more inclusive policy-making to suit the needs of various societal categories (World Bank, 2012). To make the vision of the development of India really sustainable and inclusive, women should receive equal representation in governance systems at any level.



6.4 Eliminating Gender-Based Violence and Discrimination

One of the greatest obstacles to women's participation in development is gender-based violence. Vision 2047 needs to perceive India as a place where women are not subjected to violence, discrimination, and fear. This would entail fortification of legal systems, delivery of justice within a short period, provision of addresses to the victims, consideration of the actual causes through education and creation of awareness, and revolution of patriarchal attitudes and customs.

The interventions should be comprehensive to target various types of violence, including domestic, sexual, economic, psychological, and discrimination at different stages of life. It is necessary to involve men and boys as allies, break down toxic masculinity, support gender-equitable socialization, and provide safe public and private spaces. The safety measures can capitalize on the use of technology as emerging issues, such as cyber violence and online harassment, are dealt with.

6.5 Data, Monitoring, and Accountability Mechanisms

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Conclusion

The Indian quest toward Vision 2047 cannot be achieved without bringing about the historical exclusion of women and making them the key to sustainable development. The course of the margins to mainstream, although it shows a major improvement, indicates that the gaps and systemic blockades still exist, which do not allow women to reach their full potential. There is an improvement in education, economic involvement, political representation, and health outcomes, but there are still huge differences in areas, neighborhoods, and socio-economic groups.

India is a country with half of its population and human resources being women. Their empowerment is not only the issue of justice and rights but a basic precondition of sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development. It has been proven that in societies where there is gender equality, there would be increased growth in the economies, improved health and education results, lower rates of poverty, and improved environmental sustainability. In the case of India, the demographic dividend is realizable only when women are equally involved in economic, social, and political life.

To realize Vision 2047, changes in the following dimensions will be necessary. Economic empowerment requires bridging the gender disparities in the workforce, pay, and property, and entrepreneurship. Not only do women need to be given access to education, but they also need quality



education to equip them with Fourth Industrial Revolution opportunities. Political empowerment requires constitutional commitments to be implemented and the capacity of women to be developed as leaders. To achieve social change, it is necessary to eradicate gender-related violence and discrimination in addition to confronting patriarchal expectations that limit the freedom of choice and choices of women.

The way ahead requires a multi-stakeholder partnership of the government, civil society, the private sector, communities, and individuals. The policy frameworks should be empowered, resource-endowed, and implemented with effective monitoring and accountability. The social perceptions and standards should change towards gender equality based on long-term awareness, education, and intergenerational involvement.

The process of marginalized women becoming mainstream in the development history of India is characterized by resilience, agency, and potential change. As India seeks to achieve its centenary vision, the fact that women are not beneficiaries but equally important and equal partners and leaders in sustainable development is a vital pillar. The success of the country regarding the actualization of Vision 2047 will eventually be gauged by how much it will empower all women to fulfil their potential, be useful in societal development, and live with dignity, security, and freedom.

Vision 2047 should reflect an India in which gender equality is no longer a dream (but a reality), in which women are given equal opportunities to engage in any facet of life, are allowed to share their skills without limitations, and equally enjoy the fruits of their labor. This vision will need long-term dedication, radical action, and shared accountability to achieve. The movement towards the margins to the mainstream is still going on, and the role of women at the centre of sustainable development of India in the future is a challenge and opportunity that will mark the path of this country towards its centenary.

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DEMOCRATIC DEEPENING THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNANCE: REVITALIZING PANCHAYAT RAJ INSTITUTIONS FOR INDIA@2047

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Abstract

This paper discusses the issues of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) as a crucial aspect of enhancing democracy within the country as the country moves towards its one hundred and fifty-year independence mark in 2047. Although PRIs have been constitutionally acknowledged by the 73rd Amendment Act of 1992, the issues associated with them are multifaceted, such as a lack of devolution of powers, a lack of adequate funds, inadequate capacity, and social-political barriers. This paper is based on an empirical study and policy analysis to assess the situation of local governance in the 2.5 lakh gram panchayats of India, with more than 65 percent of the population. The study finds major hindrances in the lack of functional autonomy, fiscal dependency, elite capture, and poor institutional capacity, which interfere with democratic decentralization. The paper outlines an extensive revitalization agenda that involves constitutional changes, stronger fiscal federalism, governance by technology, capacity-building programs, and participation mechanisms. Through building PRIs, India will be able to attain real grassroots democracy, good service delivery, and participatory development, making the constitutional vision of self-governance and participatory democracy come true by 2047.

Keywords: Panchayat Raj Institutions, Democratic Decentralization, Local Governance, 73rd Constitutional Amendment, Fiscal Federalism, Grassroots Democracy, India@2047, Rural Development, Participatory Governance, Devolution of Powers.

1. Introduction

Indian constitutional philosophy has been in a state of deep sense of democratic decentralization since independence. The idea of Gram Swaraj by Mahatma Gandhi was an attempt to see the village community as an independent republic, which was the cornerstone of the Indian democratic system. This ideal was given a constitutional status under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992 that institutionalized Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and became the third tier of governance in the Indian federal architecture, which was a paradigmatic shift of the Indian federal system (Mathew, 2000). The necessity of enhancing local governance has obtained a new urgency as India is closer to its centenary of independence in 2047, in the context of attaining sustainable development, social inclusion, and participatory democracy.

PRIs are the largest democratic decentralization experiment in the world, with around 2.5 lakh gram panchayats, 6000 block panchayats, and 600 district panchayats (employing over 3 million elected representatives, over 1.4 million of them female representatives) (Ministry of Panchayati Raj, 2023). These institutions control more than 65 percent of the population of India and are endowed with the responsibility to administer many development programs and provide necessary services to the population. The 73rd Amendment required the constitution of PRIs, reservation of seats to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and women, regular elections, and State Finance Commissions (Ghatak and Ghatak, 2002).

Nevertheless, even 30 years after the constitutional amendment, the democratic deepening promise of PRIs is still unfulfilled halfway. There are still enormous discrepancies between the provisions of the



constitution and the ground realities. The weaknesses that hinder the efficiency of local governance include a lack of functional devolution, finances and functionaries, functional autonomy, elite capture, capacity constraints, and weak institutional mechanisms (Behar and Kumar, 2002; Sivaramakrishnan, 2000). The most important question that faces policymakers and practitioners is how to revive PRIs to achieve the constitutional vision of self-government and participatory democracy by the year 2047, when India will celebrate its centenary.

The paper discusses PRIs' development direction in India, provides an analysis of modern problematic issues, and suggests a multifaceted approach to restructuring the local governance. This paper is organized as follows: Section 2 provides a review of theoretical background and empirical literature on the topic of democratic decentralization; Section 3 reports on the current situation of PRIs and presents quantitative data; Section 4 shows the most crucial issues; Section 5 includes the strategies toward revitalization, and Section 6 includes the policy recommendations on how toward the situation of the democratic deepening by 2047.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review.

2.1 The Conceptualization of Democratic Decentralization

The term, democratic decentralization, means the process of devolution of power and the allocation of resources and responsibility between the central government to the local governments, and processes of citizen involvement in decision-making (Ribot, 2002). Schneider (2003) refers to administrative decentralization (deconcentration), fiscal, and political decentralization (devolution), and the latter is the most significant in enhancing democracy. The theoretical rationale behind decentralization is based on several pillars, which include: more allocative efficiency by matching the public services with the local preferences, more accountability due to proximity between the decisions and the people and more participation and civic involvement, and more governance innovation (Oates, 1972; Tiebout, 1956).

2.2 India Panchayat Raj Evolution

PRIs in India have gone through a number of stages through which their history can be traced. Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957) suggested that democratic decentralization should be instituted by a three-tier system. In 1978, the Ashok Mehta Committee recommended a unit of district governance. But the L.M. Singhvi Committee (1986), which gave the intellectual underpinning to the constitutional recognition of PRIs, gave importance in the real sense to decentralization and participatory democracy (Mathew, 2000). The 73rd Amendment Act of 1992 was the result of such attempts and established PRIs as constitutionally obligatory institutions with a set structure, powers, and duties.

2.3 Empirical Results on PRI Performance

There are conflicting findings related to PRIs based on empirical research. Chattopadhyay and Duflo's (2004) studies indicate that when PRIs are politically reserved for women, more public goods that women like are invested in, implying that inclusive representation is better at producing better policies. Besley et al. (2004) have discovered that the reservation of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has helped target welfare programs on marginalized communities. Nonetheless, there are serious difficulties that are recorded in research. Ban and Rao (2008) emphasize the issue of elite capture and the survival of old power systems. Manor (2004) believes that ineffective devolution of powers restrains the PRI. According to Bardhan and Mookherjee (2006), the lack of accountability is attributed to information asymmetries and capacity constraints.



3. Current status of the Panchayat Raj Institutions.

3.1 Structural Overview

As of 2023, the PRIs of India comprise a huge democratic infrastructure. Table 1 gives the structure of PRIs in various levels and patterns of representation.

Table 1: Structural Composition of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India (2023)

| Tier | Number of Institutions | Elected Representatives | Women Representatives |
|--------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Gram Panchayat | 2,52,978 | 27,94,176 | 13,47,423 (48.2%) |
| Block Panchayat | 6,614 | 95,982 | 43,561 (45.4%) |
| District Panchayat | 664 | 12,751 | 5,789 (45.4%) |
| Total | 2,60,256 | 29,02,909 | 13,96,773 (48.1%) |

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2023)

3.2 Devolution of Functions

The 73rd amendment requires 29 functions, which are listed in the eleventh schedule, to be devolved, such as agriculture, land improvement, and minor irrigation up to education, health, social welfare, etc. Nonetheless, the devolution actually is very different within states. Table 2 indicates the position of functional devolution in chosen states.

Table 2: Status of Devolution of Functions to PRIs (Selected States)

| State | Functions Devolved (out of 29) | Devolution Index (%) | Classification |
|----------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| Kerala | 28 | 96.5 | High |
| Karnataka | 26 | 89.7 | High |
| West Bengal | 24 | 82.8 | High |
| Madhya Pradesh | 19 | 65.5 | Medium |
| Uttar Pradesh | 17 | 58.6 | Medium |
| Bihar | 13 | 44.8 | Low |

Source: Ministry of Panchayati Raj (2022); Institute of Social Sciences (2021)

4. Critical Challenges Facing Panchayat Raj Institutions

4.1 Inadequate Devolution of Powers

The real devolution of powers, functions, and functionaries is still not complete in most states despite the provisions of the constitutions. The state governments have not been keen to delegate real power to PRIs because they see them as their competitors, as opposed to collaborators in governance. The role and responsibility of every tier have been poorly adopted through the activity mapping exercise. Therefore, in most cases, PRIs are not in a position to plan and execute development programs independently and instead rely on state-level bureaucracies to receive approvals and funds (Narayana, 2005).

4.2 Fiscal Dependency and Financial Constraints

Effective local governance is anchored on financial autonomy. But PRIs are fraught with chronic inadequacy of resources. The own-source revenues comprise not more than 5 percent of the total PRI revenues, so they are highly reliant on central and state transfers. State Finance Commissions, which have been required to suggest devolution of resources to PRIs, have failed to work in most states. The amount distributed by the 15th Finance Commission on rural and urban local governments was only 4.25 percent of the taxes that are divisible pool, and that is too little considering the wide range of responsibilities that they have. In addition, tied grants limit the independence of PRI over resource allocation and compromise the notion of local decision-making (Rao and Bird, 2010).



Cover Page

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4.3 Deficiencies in capacities and human resources limitations

Good governance involves having good institutions and qualified people. PRIs are strained in terms of acute capacity at various levels. Elected representatives usually do not receive enough training in planning, financial management as well and program implementation. PRIs are often not equipped with technical and administrative personnel, and are left at the mercy of state-level departments. There is an extreme shortage of qualified personnel at the gram panchayat level. A lot of panchayats do not have secretaries, accountants, or tech people, which are crippling their capacity to meet their mandated roles (Mathew, 2003).

4.4. Elite Capture and Social Exclusion

Even with political reluctance to marginalized groups, according to most areas, the traditional power structure still controls panchayat governance. There is rampant elite appropriation of resources and decision-making processes. The representatives of the superior caste or classes will sometimes act as the agents of the interests of these dominant caste or class by proxy. The representatives of women often struggle with the constraints of patriarchy and lack the authority to make decisions, even though their number is high. Gram sabhas, as conceptualized as participatory democracy, are poorly attended and dominated by elite groups at the expense of vulnerable groups such as Dalits, Adivasis, and women (Heller et al., 2007).

4.5 Ineffective Accountability Systems

Democratic government goes hand in hand with accountability. Nonetheless, PRIs have poor accountability systems. MGNREGA requires social audits, but these are not organized in other programs. There is also insufficient disclosure of information, which restricts citizens from questioning the performance of PRIs. Gram sabhas usually make poor accountability forums. This is because the political, administrative, and social accountability intersect, leading to confusion and dilution of responsibility and hence corruption and mismanagement (Johnson, 2003).

5. Proposals on Revitalizing Panchayat Raj Institutions

5.1 Constitutional and Legal Reforms

Enhancing PRIs needs constitutional and legal interventions, which must fully devolve powers. The necessary reforms would include: (a) Transforming the State Election Commissioner to a constitutional body, which would possess financial and administrative independence; (b) requiring states to fully accomplish the activity mapping and transfer of functionaries to PRIs within a given timeframe; (c) making it clear how gram sabha should work, and how to empower them as primary decision-making centers; (d) to provide constitutional protection to PRIs of money and mandate them to have minimum allocations by state budgets.

5.2 Improved Fiscal Federalism and Devolution of Resources

PRI needs to be financially empowered. It should involve: (a) raising the part of PRIs in the transfer of the Finance Commission resources to no less than 10% of the divisible pool; (b) strengthening the State Finance Commissions and their recommendations; (c) expanding the power of PRIs to levy taxes on local economic processes; (d) offering untied grants to enhance local autonomy in the distribution of resources; (e) creating transparent and formula-based transfer schemes, which would limit the degree of arbitrariness and political interference.

5.3 Technology-Enhanced governance and Digital infrastructure

Digital technologies can include groundbreaking possibilities of PRI governance. Some of those initiatives are: (a) integration of management information systems in all PRIs to do planning, budgeting, and monitoring; (b) digital solutions in gram sabha proceedings, which allows more people to participate and recordkeeping; (c) mobile solutions in grievance redressal of citizens and service delivery; (d) use of GIS and remote sensing to map the assets, manage land records, and plan spatial



planning;(e) the use of digital financial management system to improve transparency and reduce corruption;(f) use of e-procurement system to do transparent and efficient purchase processes

5.4 General Capacity Building Model

The institutional capacity needs to be strengthened through systematic interventions: (a) Creation of specific training institutions at the district and state level to train the elected representatives and the PRI functional furthermore on an ongoing basis; (b) Development of standardized training modules about governance, planning, financial management and social accountability; (c) Creation of professional cadre of panchayat administrators which is to be further trained; (d) Mentorship and peer-learning; (e) Study visit and exposure to best practices in successful panchayats; (f) Strengthening of the district

5.5 Encouraging Diverse Engagement and Social Responsibility

To make democracy more democratic, it will be necessary to involve all the sections of the society:

(a) Strengthening gram sabhas by law to ensure that minimum frequency of meeting and quorum requirements with marginalized group of people and decision making; (b) Intensive social audit of all PRI programs and schemes; (c) Ward sabhas and mohalla sabhas involving closer contact with the citizens; (d) Development of a means of inclusion of marginalized groups such as specific woman, Dalit and Adivasi platforms; (e) The integration of PRIs and community based organizations.

6. Policy Roadmap for India@2047

The vision of vibrant local democracy as envisioned by India by the centenary century will need a broad policy roadmap that will include short-term interventions, medium-term interventions, and long-term interventions. The roadmap must be based on the concept of subsidiarity - responsibilities should be delegated down to the most competent level of governance.

Short-term priorities (2024-2027)

Add activity mapping in every state, moving of the functions to PRIs, creating integrated MIS platforms, enhancing State Finance Commissions, and the use of mandatory social audits in all schemes.

Medium-term priorities (2027-2035)

involve extension of PRIs' taxation, attainment of a minimum 10 percent share of transfers in the Finance Commission, creation of professional panchayat administration cadres, establishment of a complete digital governance infrastructure, and development of strong capacity-building institutions on all levels.

Long-term vision (2035-2047)

encompasses the realization of functional autonomy of all PRIs, the creation of self-sufficient local governments, whose own-source revenues form at least 30 percent of total revenues, universal digital platforms of governance, full social accountability by participation of citizens and PRIs as the main institutions of local development planning and execution.

Sector-specific strategies should also be targeted in the policy framework. In the education sector, PRIs must be able to control the primary and secondary schools in terms of hiring teachers, development of infrastructure, and monitoring of quality. In the medical field, PRIs are supposed to run primary health facilities, community health practitioners, and preventive health programs. In the case of infrastructure, PRIs are to be given the mandate to plan and execute local roads, water supply and sanitation, and public spaces. PRIs should form the basis of agricultural development in terms of extension, marketing infrastructure, and subsidies for farmer groups.

Also, there should be increased intergovernmental coordination mechanisms. The District Planning Committees need to be reinvigorated as organizations for integrating plans among the urban and rural local bodies. At the state level, there should be apex bodies of panchayats where policy advocacy and sharing of knowledge should be developed. Consistent multi-stakeholder forums where elected



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representatives, bureaucrats, civil society, and citizens interact and co-rule should be used to promote dialogue and collaborative governance.

7. Conclusion

The constitutional vision of self-governance and participatory development is the constitutional body of Indian democracy that is embodied in Panchayat Raj Institutions. The promise of democratic deepening is yet to be fulfilled in full after 30 years since the 73rd Amendment, where, despite the great strides that have been made in the establishment of institutional structures, the promise still requires a lot to be fulfilled. The PRIs' problems are complex, comprising a lack of the relevant devolution of powers, financial resources, capacity, elite seizure, and accountability, and will need long-term and multi-tiered solutions.

With India moving towards its 100th anniversary of independence in 2047, it is of fundamental importance that PRIs are revitalized not only as a reform of administration but also as a precondition to inclusive development, social justice, and authentic democratic participation. India 2047 vision should be anchored on empowered local governments, financially independent, institutionally competent, politically responsible, and socially inclusive.

Some of the suggested revitalization frameworks include constitutional reforms that entail full devolution, increased fiscal federalism with significant resource transfers, technology-based governance that is oriented towards transparency and efficiency, overall capacity building at all levels, and an improved participatory democracy and social accountability. The adoption of such a framework needs political goodwill at the central and state levels, bureaucratic interest in power sharing, and citizen involvement.

The PRIs' transformation is not a goal in itself, but a tool towards achieving more developmental dreams. Strong local governments will be much more effective in providing services, they will be more responsive to local needs, they will include marginalized groups in development, encourage local innovation in governance, and they will build a powerful democratic culture by increasing local citizen involvement. By establishing the pillars of the grassroots democracy, India will be able to develop a more just, participatory, and responsive system of governance that is worthy of a country that strives to be a world leader in the area of democratic governance.

The process of the re-energized PRIs will not be quick, but will need an investment of resources and long-term dedication and institutional change. But this is the necessary investment to meet the constitutional pledge of gram swaraj and attain an India@2047 vision of a developed, inclusive, and democratic country with all its citizens having a say in the decisions impacting their lives and communities.

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