

Sociology Daily Answer Writing

Week 4 - Day 3

Model Structures

1. Examine the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions and Urban Local Bodies in deepening democracy in India. 20

Model structure:

Introduction

- Two decades have elapsed since the enactment of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution and more than 15 years have passed since the enactment of the (Provisions of Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1996.

Main Body

- The main purpose of these Acts was to strengthen the Panchayati Raj System (PRS) in the country.
- In order to function, panchayats as institution of self-government (ISG), the panchayats have to fulfill two basic conditions, namely,
 - (a) institutional existence in the sense that the decisions are taken by the people's representatives,
 - (b) institutional capacity, which means that these institutions have clearly defined functions, functionaries and finances.
- Role of PRIs and Urban Local Bodies in deepening democracy:
 - Promote Democratic Representation: RI system increases cooperation among people, democratic participation and decentralization. Eg. Gram Sabha
 - Effective and Efficient Planning: The 2.5 lakh Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country have been entrusted to provide basic services in the villages and plan for local economic development.
 - Ensures Good Governance: 'Consensus oriented' and 'Participation' are two important pillars of Good Governance and the PRI helps in ensuring both these pillars.

- PESA Act has not only made the Gram Sabha a strong body but has also put jal, jungle and Jamin (water, forest and land) under its control. Panchayats are expected to take the approval of the Gram Sabha in matters relating to the rural economy.
- Reservations for SCs, STs and women have been provided in the Panchayats for membership and chairpersonship across the country. As a result of this provision, more than six lakh SCs/STs and more than 10 lakh women have been holding the offices of the members and chairpersons at different tiers of the Panchayats. 25 percent women notice and remark on the visible change in their status within their family after they have been elected
- Challenges (Conflict view)
 - Lack of Effective Devolution: Some of the important subjects like fuel and fodder, non-conventional energy sources, rural electrification including distribution of electricity, non-formal education, small scale industries including food processing industries, technical training, and vocational education have not been devolved in certain states.
 - Insufficient Grants/Funds
 - Issue of **Sarpanch Pati** (hindering women empowerment) - also, it is a marker of patriarchal culture in India.
 - Infrastructural Challenges: Building, internet, etc.
 - Lack of Support Staff
 - Regional variation: It may be observed that from the point of view of devolution of power, states like Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Sikkim and West Bengal are the better performers. Whereas, the performance of Arunachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Bihar, Assam and Uttarakhand are poor. Kerala stands out as the top performing state in this index.
 - Whatever is being done in the name of Panchayati Raj is supply driven instead of demand driven.
 - Caste prejudices emerged as a major problem in the functioning of the Panchayats. This is due to unwillingness and grouse the dominant castes hold for having themselves become ineligible to share the powers and control they have

long been used to in the PRIs, on account of constitutional provisions for the marginalized group. This has resulted into a paradoxical situation, where, on the one hand, Panchayati Raj Act provides de jure powers to the office of the chairpersons at different levels and, on the other, de facto, they remain bereft of these powers. The local bureaucracy, which is expected to work under the control of the elected representatives of the Panchayats, is either generally away from the scene or succumbs to the pressure of the village politics and power game

Extra Fodder Material

The Act was instrumental, to some extent, in igniting the process of releasing the depressed, oppressed and suppressed energy of these groups who got the opportunity to come forward as elected representatives. It was found that wherever the Dalit elected representatives were oppressed and obstructed by the dominant castes, they came out openly to resist and to struggle against the oppressors. Importantly, it was also found that whenever the women Panchayat leaders were literate, they were found to be more assertive than the others. The other side of the phenomenon is that the elected representatives of these groups, especially the educated ones among them, had become quite visible, assertive and vocal whenever the circumstances allowed. It may be treated as the beginning of the end of the invisibility of these sections in the local governance scenario. Thus, the affirmative action for these groups in local governance has resulted in social identities and political awareness among them and created an urge to become part of the mainstream political, economic and social life. The political space given to marginalised sections has, to some extent, dealt a blow to the asymmetrical social structure at the local level and given greater space for their participation and involvement in decision-making at local level. Therefore not many powers have been given to the Panchayats even after two decades of its implementation of the Central Act in the country. Marginalised groups have got the seats in the local government but they are not as effective as they should be due to caste prejudices and lack of capacity to govern. The remedy lies in the organic organization of Panchayat leaders to assert and bargain for the empowerment of local self-governments

2. Write Sociological perspective on Child labour

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Model Structure:

Introduction

- Child labour refers to the use of children as a source of labour while depriving them of their fundamental rights in the process. Such rights include the opportunity to enjoy their childhood, attend school regularly, have peace of mind, and live a dignified life.

Main Body

Child labour is caused by several factors. Some of them include:

- Poverty: Children who come from poor families may be forced to work to support household income and support kinship groups. Such a practice is a common phenomenon in poverty-stricken regions.
- Illiteracy: Illiterate people view education as a preserve of the privileged in society. They will therefore not provide support to children so that they can go to school and build solid foundations for future success.
- The high cost of education: Quality education is expensive. Parents let their children stay at home because there is a lack of money to send them to school, parents opt to have them working as unskilled labourers to help support the family.
- Pull factors: Huge demand for unskilled labourers and cheap wages to a child making an attractive option for many greedy employers.
- Bonded labour: many a time child labour is the payback for debt taken by the bonded family from their moneylenders.

Child labour has several negative impacts. Some of them include:

- Loss of Quality childhood: It leads to loss of quality childhood and hampers their growth and development. A child forced to work will miss many of the good things associated with childhood.
- Health issues: Child labour can also lead to health complications due to undernourishment and poor working conditions.
- Sexual exploitation: Child labour makes them vulnerable to sexual exploitation due to unorganized nature of employment.

- Mental trauma: Issues such as bullying, sexual exploitation, and unfavourable working hours may result in mental trauma in these children. Child labour may also result in the lack of emotional growth and thus insensitivity.
- Illiteracy: Children that are employed do not have the time to go to school. The lack of education and illiteracy makes them individuals with limited opportunities as far as employment is concerned.

Conclusion

- Child labour is not just an affront to the rights of a child but also a symbol of a society that has lost its way. We should, therefore, all strive to ensure that the fundamental rights of children are protected and that they are accorded the opportunity to go after their dreams and aspirations.
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