

Potential of Gram Panchayat in the Transformation of Rural India: A Socio-Legal Analysis

Shubharth Shukla¹

Arima Pankaj²

Abstract

Villages are the fundamental entity of a country which is a true reflection of a country's social and cultural ethos. Democratic decentralization is based on the notion that greater participation of the public will improve the quality of services provided by the government and the gram panchayats are at the fulcrum of local self-government which has a responsibility of serving as the engine of socio-economic development in the villages. The 73rd Constitutional amendment has created a formal structure of local governance that aims for inclusive governance. Gram panchayats are the institutions that can transform rural India through holistic development. The research paper aims to analyze the role of gram panchayats as an instrument that can impart development in various sectors such as health, economy, and technology and will also try to point out areas where special attention is needed, this paper will deal with the role of gram panchayat in realizing the right to education (Art 21A) concerning the rural population. People of villages are unaware of their legal rights and due to this, they refuse to take the path of formal justice, this article shall also discuss the relevance of gram panchayats in access to justice which is an important part of Article 21 and Article 14 of the Indian constitution. In the coming years, a greater degree of responsibility will be there, with the increase in focus on implementing welfare schemes in rural areas, there is a need to increase the quantum of financial devolution (Art. 243 I) and the gram panchayats has to be given more financial

autonomy (Art. 243 H) which will help the panchayats in functioning effectively. This paper shall also attempt to recommend measures toward making gram panchayats a robust institution of local governance.

Keywords: Gram panchayat, Local self-governance, Holistic development, Information and Communication Technology, Economy, Clean Villages, Panchayati Raj system, Democratic Decentralization.

Introduction

"The future of India lies in its villages"

-Mahatma Gandhi

Villages are known as the fundamental part of any country; it has been said that rural areas are the true reflection of a country's social and cultural ethos. Without taking the villages together a nation cannot develop, so with this thought the idea of democratic decentralization was developed which was based upon the notion that these fundamental units should have a wider say in the development of the villages. The Constitution which enshrines one of the Directive Principles of State Policy lays down that "the State 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"³. To give Panchayati Raj Institutions certainty, continuity, and strength, it is necessary to enshrine certain fundamental and essential features of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the Constitution in light of experience over

1 Assistant professor of Law, Hitkarini Law College, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh.

2 Research Assistant, Dr. Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

3 INDIA CONST. art. 269

the past forty years and because of the shortcomings that have been observed.⁴ It was in the year 1992, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was passed, which took effect on April 24, 1993. This amendment created gram panchayats and gave them the necessary powers to formulate their plan of governance and to evolve as bodies of local self-governance. The 73rd amendment has created a formal structure for local governance at multiple levels which mandates holistic, inclusive, and community-driven development of villages.⁵ The 73rd amendment act also brings the 11th schedule into the picture, which contains 29 areas in which the gram panchayats must prepare and implement economic development and social justice schemes.⁶

The importance of panchayats has also been recognized by the Judiciary. In the case of *Village Panchayat Calangute V/s Additional Director of Panchayat*,⁷ while emphasizing the constitutional status enjoyed by panchayats, it was held that Panchayats can formulate their programs of economic development and social justice as they enjoy a Constitutional status.

The potential of gram panchayat and Panchayati raj institutions has not been realized completely still a lot of work has to be done with the existing functioning of the institutes of local governance, panchayats are the institutions responsible for economic development and social justice in rural areas, and play an important role as agents of village transformation, it can act as a convergence point for execution of various central and state schemes which can ultimately transform the lives of the common man in the village by making them self-sufficient and creating opportunities for future generations.

The research aims to point out the potential areas where the gram panchayats can play an important role in holistically developing the villages and transforming the lives of various inhabitants of villages and will also try to point out areas where special attention is needed and

shall also provide recommendations for making gram panchayats a robust institution of local governance.

Relevance of Gram Panchayats for the Development of Villages

India's Panchayats are anticipated to be crucial to rural development. It creates job opportunities and supports agricultural expansion, which in turn may increase rural incomes, encourage greater consumption, and have important multiplier impacts on the entire economy. Given the rising global food demand, there are unexplored employment opportunities in the agricultural sector. The significance of these organizations in the polity has been emphasized in plan documents from both the central and state governments as well as from various committees. The importance of Panchayats in rural development was given great focus in five-year plans, particularly the second five-year plan. A panchayat was envisioned as being in charge of village development under the second five-year plan to transform the social and economic lives of rural areas. Rural development is fully dependent on the presence of a vibrant village organization that can engage everyone, including the weaker groups, in shared projects that are carried out with administrative support. The second Five Year Plan required the Panchayats to carry out judicial, civic, and developmental tasks to accomplish this goal.

The gram panchayats⁸ being the lower tier of local governance were formed with a vision to provide opportunities to the inhabitants of rural India, to govern themselves and frame development policies at the local level through the institution called Gram Sabha⁹. Gram Sabha is at the fulcrum of the village governance and the mandates of Panchayati raj. People through the platform of Gram Sabha can play an important role in discussing governance issues of villages and can frame village-suited plans for the development and progress of the rural people. The Panchayat is the main implementing authority of the development plans, which is

4 National Portal Of India, <https://www.india.gov.in/> (last visited on Mar. 3, 2022)

5 K.P. Mishra, *Participatory Democracy through Gram Sabha in Madhya Pradesh*, 70 *The Indian Journal of Political Science* 801, 801-803 (2009).

6 INDIA CONST. art. 243G

7 *Village Panchayat Calangute V/s Additional Director of Panchayat*, (2012) 7 SCC 550.

8 INDIA CONST. art. 243, cl. d.

9 INDIA CONST. art. 243, cl. b.

Shubharth Shukla, Arima Pankaj

monitored and supervised by the gram Sabha.¹⁰ The decisions of the Panchayats are taken through the Gram Sabha and every decision taken by the panchayats cannot be made official and valid without the consent of the Gram Sabha¹¹. There is a need to revamp the whole model of village governance, and the traditional method of working of Gram Sabhas needs to be transformed into a model to satisfy the needs of development at all levels, the Gram Sabhas can build up around an axis of those things which gives every village a distinct identity and can create model villages, there are a lot of areas where the villages can play a big role in the all-round development of villages.

Clean and Healthy Villages

A healthy body is a necessity for all human activities. In a welfare state, the state must ensure the creation and sustenance of conditions necessary for good health. Maintenance and improvement of public health are on a very high pedestal as they are indispensable to the very existence of a community, hence it is a primary duty of the welfare state to ensure that facilities for the maintenance of good health are adequately provided.¹²

The right to life has been enshrined in Article 21, which means something more than survival or animal existence¹³, which includes the right to live with dignity¹⁴ and would also include all those aspects of life which makes the life of man meaningful, complete, and worth living¹⁵, which include right to decent environment and a right to good health. The right to health is a fundamental right, health is not merely the absence of sickness. The term health implies more than that, it implies medical care and facilities not only for protection against sickness but also to ensure stable manpower for economic development. Facilities of health and medical care generate devotion and dedication to give the best, physically as well as mentally, Article 47 of the

constitution reiterates the constitutional obligation to improve public health¹⁶. The Gram Panchayats being the lower level of governance model needs to incorporate measures such as health care facilities, and qualified medical professional for the maintenance of good health of the rural population which will contribute to the productivity of the villages. Since the majority of the population has their roots in the villages, unless and until the population of villages is developed holistically and inclusively the development of India lies in shambles. One such aspect is the cleanliness and health of villages, if the villages are not clean and healthy, then the development of villages will remain incomplete. Poor sanitation is often linked with the occurrence of various diseases such as cholera, diarrhea, hepatitis B, typhoid, etc. Poor sanitation is estimated to cause 432 000 diarrhoeal deaths annually and is a major factor in several neglected tropical diseases, including intestinal worms, schistosomiasis, and trachoma, and also contributes to malnutrition¹⁷. The absence of cleanliness can also lead to reduced human beings and socio-economic development.

The Prime Minister in his maiden speech from the ramparts of Red fort gave a clear call for building a clean India with special priority for clean villages and treating cleanliness as a social obligation to fulfill the vision of Mahatma Gandhi, with the objective of human life cleaner, healthier and dignified on this realm, Swachh Bharat mission was launched on October 2, 2014. This initiative has transformed the village, every house in an open defecation-free village can save up to 50000 Lacs because they are saving on medical expenditures which they would have spent on the treatment of diseases. This money can now be utilized by families for education, in getting new amenities and facilities which will raise their standard of living it has also been suggested because of reduction in the frequency of getting ill the

10 Kamlesh Gupta, *Gram Sabha: A Step towards Self Governance: A study of Madhya Pradesh*, 70 The Indian Journal of Political Science 209, 209-211 (2009).

11 VIKASPEDIA, <https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/rural-poverty-alleviation-1/sdgs-and-gram-panchayats/development-and-panchayats> (last visited on Mar. 6, 2022).

12 T.N. Medical Officers Association v. Union of India, (2021) 6 SCC 568.

13 State of Maharashtra v. Chandrabhan, AIR 1983 SC 803.

14 Francis Coralie Mullen v. Union Territory Delhi Administrator, AIR 1981 SC 746.

15 Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India, AIR 1978 SC 597.

16 T.N. Medical Officers Association v. Union of India, (2021) 6 SCC 568.

17 World Health Organization, <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/sanitation> (last visited on Mar. 5, 2022).

overall work performance and productivity of the village has increased.

Gram panchayats have also played a commendable role in making this mission a mass movement, they have made their villages ODF by connecting with the masses, door-to-door awareness, framing unique schemes for the implementation of the mission, construction of infrastructure for sanitation and also promoted environment related issues by initiating activities related to solid and liquid waste management.

Gram panchayats have also integrated Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005(MGNREGA)¹⁸ with Swachh Bharat Abhiyan for making every panchayat a clean panchayat through awareness programs, training of villagers, construction of toilets in every household, schools, and Anganwadis and work related to solid and liquid waste management.

Lack of a healthy population is detrimental both for individuals and for villages, firstly it will prevent individuals from performing better, drain money due to medical expenses, hospital expenses, and loss of employment, secondly, for villages, it will deprive of a hardworking and productive workforce, hence gram panchayat has a very important role to play in maintaining the overall health of villagers, which ultimately give long term benefits. With the onset of the pandemic, we have realized that the village's health and awareness are an important part of gram panchayat functions.

Reach of Technology in Gram Panchayats

The Panchayati raj system in India aims to develop local self-government at the district and village levels. E-governance at the village level will not only lead to the development of the people at the grassroots level but also the betterment of services provided to them, when the gram panchayats will be endowed with state-of-the-art technologies the panchayats can effectively perform their functions, these technologies can help in better monitoring, financial accounting, reporting of various schemes and maintenance of various records related to Panchayat. There will be more transparency in the functioning of the Gram Panchayat, more accountability,

and efficient functioning of the Panchayati raj system in India. As per the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) which was launched in 2006, the government intended to introduce such technologies which will improve the efficiency and functioning of gram panchayats in India. To meet the objectives, the ministry of Panchayati raj came forward with its mission mode project "E – panchayat mission" in the year 2018. This project covered all the aspects of gram panchayats, including monitoring, budgeting, social audit planning, implementation, accounting, social audit, and civil service delivery of issuance of certificates, licenses, etc.¹⁹ The objective of the E-Panchayat project was to increase the transparency, accountability, and efficiency of Panchayats. More people's participation in decision-making can be ensured as well as improving the delivery of services at the grassroots level.

The E-Panchayat mission mode project(MMP) with its Panchayat Enterprise Suite(PES) applications has been instrumental in performing the following activities:-

- a. **Unified portal focusing on Work Based Accounting:** It aims to provide an interface with easy navigation which will help the gram panchayats in tracking, monitoring, and modifying the policies.
- b. **On-boarding of schemes on PRIASoft-PFMS integration for real-time payments by GPs:** There has been significant stress given by the ministry in place a robust mechanism that can track entire activity right from the level of planning to monitor and maintaining a record of all the expenditure incurred for from initial to final stage and also accounting the details of the assets which are created through such works.²⁰
- c. **Gram Manচিত্রা:** It is an application that aims to provide unified Geo-Spatial data for the gram panchayats to channel the various works of development across the 29 sectors along with a decision evaluation mechanism for the gram panchayat development plan. With the increase in the application of Information and Communication (ICT) in the working methods of gram panchayat it has yielded promising results in the overall administration and monitoring of the schemes, but it has

18 Press Information Bureau, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=196201> (last visited on Mar. 25, 2022).

19 Press Information Bureau, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1779217> (last visited February 20, 2022).

20 Press Information Bureau, <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=196201> (last visited on Feb. 20, 2022).

Shubharth Shukla, Arima Pankaj

also increased effective participation which will culminate in an accountable and transparent system at the grass root level. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of India, 1992 was a landmark Act that enabled decentralized and participative governance through Panchayats in rural areas.²¹ The National E-governance (NeGP) had the objective of making all government services available to the public at large through electronic media. It was a plan of the Government of India comprising 27 mission mode projects which got approval from the government on 18th May 2006. Under the e-panchayat project, the ministry of Panchayati raj and the national informatics center has mapped about 250000 panchayats and has been providing various types of training for institutionalizing e-panchayats, such as the staff and the panchayat representatives are being provided with elementary computer knowledge which aims to provide basic understanding and awareness about the usage and application of computers in day to day working of panchayats and to ensure institutionalization at the grass root level, the officials of the panchayats are also being trained in the panchayat enterprise suite application which aims to provide as an integrated view of the actions of panchayats by ensuring seamless flow of information from various functional level.²² The 73rd constitutional amendment Act of 1992 has significance in the history of the Constitution. It added part IX to the constitution and formulated gram panchayats to function as self-governing bodies. It also added schedule XI to the Constitution of India which has around 29 items.²³ The central idea behind this act was to decentralize power from the center to local levels so that people can participate more directly at the local level. This idea of decentralization owes its genesis to the several Gandhian Principles enshrined in Part

IV of the Constitution of India from Articles 36-51. The 73rd amendment provided for a three-tier system in every state at the village, intermediate, and district levels and endowed them with powers and functions so that they can function as units of local self-government. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment enacted in the year 1993, was passed to impart basic certainty, continuity, and strength to the Panchayats.²⁴

Gram Panchayat and its Role in the Transformation of Economy

With the development of gram panchayats, the menace of corruption which is on a rise can end, leading to the end of other malpractices. The participation of people is important in the functioning of democracy and is considered an important pillar of good governance. There is more participation of women in policies and programs with the development of gram panchayat. More employment generation takes place leading to a better economy and also the growth of small and cottage industries. Recently, the government launched a scheme, called a survey of villages and mapping with improvised technology in villages (SVAMITWA) with the objective of socio-economic empowerment of people living in rural areas.²⁵ Since time immemorial villages have played an important role in the development of the country and economy. India's culture and values lie in its villages. Agriculture and related industries are crucial to the development of every industry, small and large.²⁶ Indian economy is performing well in the service sector and manufacturing sector but the Indian agriculture sector is predominantly production linked and plays a vital role in the Indian economy which is currently in the doldrums with vibrant gram panchayats, we can create an atmosphere of increasing agricultural productivity and that surplus production can contribute

21 Jhumur Ghosh, Relevance and use of ICT in grassroots participation in Panchayats, 5, Global Media Journal-Indian Edition (2014), https://www.caluniv.ac.in/global-mdia-journal/ARTICLE-JUNE-2014/A_4.pdf.

22 Ministry of Panchyat Raj, <https://panchayat.gov.in/e-governance> (last visited on Mar. 16, 2022).

23 Bidyut Mohanty, Panchayati Raj, 73rd Constitutional Amendment and Women, 30 Economic And Political Weekly 3346, 3346-3350 (1995).

24 A.B Kadam and Swapnil Shanbhag, Deferring Gram Panchayat Elections: Breaking the Camel's Back, Manupatra.

25 TANISHA BAMBORIA, Role of Village Panchayat in socio-economic development and challenges to it, Lexlife India (Mar. 17, 2022, 9:29 PM), <https://lexlife68840978.wordpress.com/2021/07/03/role-of-village-panchayat-in-socio-economic-development-and-challenges-to-it/>.

26 *Id.* at 25.

in agricultural export and thereby contributing to the growth of the economy. The rural economy is capable of employing a large number of people in their hometown, as a Gram Sabha, important steps need to be taken in the development of the allied industry which is linked to agriculture such as livestock management, dairy, warehousing, and organic farming which can yield significant results in the development of the economy. Gram panchayats can also play a very important role in the cluster approach which is based on the concept of One village One Product which can be adopted to increase value addition, marketing, and export potential which will ultimately benefit the marginal, small, and landless farmers. Gram panchayats can also play an important role in the identification of unique products which can give commercial benefit through Geographical Indication (GI) tagging and setting up rural incubation centers which can help farmers for obtaining GI and traceability solutions for their produce which will help GI products to grow and it can also develop value chains for the produce.

Through Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) the gram panchayats can help in organizing the people of entrepreneurial ability to start their ventures which can give uniqueness in terms of its production, supply and management, and distribution to create a market of rural products. For financial assistance, the gram panchayat can work towards making a mini rural bank where the population in the village or village clusters can pool money and can provide handholding support to those people who desire to start a venture in the villages.

As India is a young nation, the majority of its population is under the workable age but the jobs are limited so it is practically not possible to employ every person. It also cannot afford for this chunk of the productive population to be left behind especially youth who are living in rural areas so skill development is the tool through which one can endow the rural youth with some necessary skills which increase their employability and also

allow them to start their own business, in achieving this task of imparting skill development gram panchayats can play a very positive role, the gram panchayat can make a record of people who are in working age group, gram panchayats can partner with local industries for imparting industrial specific skills, gram panchayats can organize training camps to identify potential candidates and skills of interested candidates and gram panchayat through the help of government they take impart skills to rural youth under various schemes of the government such as Skill India Mission, Start. Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme²⁷ which is implemented under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojna – National Rural Livelihood Mission²⁸ and Rural Self Employment Institute²⁹, etc.

Access to Justice in Rural Areas

A country cannot be said to be democratic if the voices of the public are unheard, so to make the people's voices strong, a legal framework is designed to give them a forum for raising their voices. But very often we have seen the voice of the public is not even heard, that they can go to courts for their grievances to be addressed, but a large number of people especially in rural areas do not have access to courts or justice.

The Rule of law which is deeply rooted in our constitution as a facet of article 14 and article 21³⁰ is certainly meaningless unless the common man is having access to justice. Access to justice means easily reaching up to the doors of the courts for the resolution of disputes. It is a recognized human right that a person has a right to an effective remedy by a competent tribunal for violation of rights which are given to him in the Constitution or any other law³¹, and to have a fair hearing by an independent tribunal for the determination of his rights and obligations³².

In our villages access to justice is a difficult task to achieve because in village areas majority of people are oblivious to these rights which have been guaranteed

27 Vikaspedia, <https://vikaspedia.in/social-welfare/entrepreneurship/start-up-village-entrepreneurship-programme-national-rural-livelihood-mission> (last visited on March 1, 2022).

28 National Portal of India, <https://www.india.gov.in/spotlight/deen-dayal-antyodaya-yojana> (last visited on March 5, 2022).

29 Rural self-Employment Training Institutes, <http://nirdpr.org.in/rseti/> (last visited on March 3, 2022).

30 Anita kushwaha v. Pushap Sudan, AIR 2016 SC 3506.

31 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 8

32 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 10

Shubharth Shukla, Arima Pankaj

by the constitution, lack of education and awareness and delay in the trial are also the principal reasons for the hesitancy among the rural population in availing the courts for dispute resolution, as a result, they recuse themselves from the judicial process and the majority of crimes and violation of rights goes unreported. To provide swift and substantial justice to the rural inhabitants, on the recommendation of the 114th Law Commission Report of India came up with the Gram Nyayalayas Act 2008, mandates the establishment of village courts³³ for speedy and easy dispute resolution in the rural areas of India. Gram Nyayalaya is a court of Judicial Magistrate of the first class³⁴ whose presiding officer (Nyayadhikari) is appointed by the State Government after consultation with the High Court³⁵.

The creation of the Gram Nyayalayas Act 2008 was done with a vision of imparting justice to the rural inhabitants, providing speedy justice, reducing the cost of litigation, reducing the burden on courts, and reducing reliance on informal and extra-constitutional modes of justice delivery. This vision did not turn out into reality as this Act had various shortcomings such as:-

- a. Less no gram panchayats are functional, as per the official data, 476 Gram Nyayalayas have been notified by 15 States. But out of these 256 is operational in 10 States at present. State-wise details of the Gram Nyayalayas notified, operationalized by the State Governments, and the status of fund release by this Department are as under³⁶:

Sl. No.	State/UT	Gram Nyayalayas Notified	Gram Nyayalayas Functional	Fund released (Amount in Rs.lakh)
1	Madhya Pradesh	89	89	2456.40
2	Rajasthan	45	45	1240.98
3	Kerela	30	30	828.00
4	Maharashtra	36	23	660.80
5	Odisha	23	19	337.40

6	Uttar Pradesh	113	43	1323.20
7	Karnataka	2	2	25.20
8	Haryana	2	2	25.20
9	Punjab	9	2	25.20
10	Jharkhand	6	1	75.60
11	Goa	2	0	25.20
12	Andhra Pradesh	42	0	436.82
13	Telangana	55	0	693.00
14	Jammu & Kashmir	20	0	0.00
15	Ladakh	2	0	0.00
Total		476	256	8153.00

- b. Lack of infrastructure.
- c. Lack of manpower, officers like notaries, stamp vendors etc
- d. Inadequate Central assistance
- e. Lack of awareness among lawyers, police officials
- f. The reluctance by the state to invoke the jurisdiction of Gram Nyayalayas

Gram panchayats can play a very important role in ensuring access to justice for inhabitants of rural India, through its development measures such as the incorporation of technology and making the gram panchayat office equipped with state-of-the-art communication technologies. It can connect needy and poor to dedicated lawyers via video conferencing and telephones through Common Service Centres for pre- and post-litigation advice.

Gram panchayat can also launch a mass awareness campaign for imparting basic legal knowledge so that the rural people can become informed about constitutional and other legal rights.³⁷

It can with help of the district legal services authority, organize and maintain the repository of legal practi-

33 Gram Nyayalaya Act, 2008, § 3, No. 4, Acts of Parliament, 2009(India).

34 Gram Nyayalaya Act, 2008, § 6, No. 4, Acts of Parliament, 2009(India).

35 Gram Nyayalaya Act, 2008, § 5, No. 4, Acts of Parliament, 2009(India).

36 Press Information Bureau, <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1782616> (last visited on July 20, 2022).

37 Tanu Shikhaa Arya, Panchayat Participation in Adult Literacy Programmes 45 Economic And Political Weekly (EPW) 29, 29-30 (2010).

tioners who are ready to provide pro bono legal services and Lok Adalat for the resolution of pending cases.

The Gram Panchayats, under the guidance of various experts can also resort to other forms of dispute resolution such as mediation, conciliation, etc.

It can also help in addressing the issues related to the non-reporting of offenses and in making people aware of availing legal measures for the redressal of their grievances.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Mahatma Gandhi was one of the important votaries who favored participatory democracy and called for a political group which is village based and endowed with the thought of a stateless, classless society for the creation of gram swaraj. Gram Swaraj is a concept that mandates the creation of a social order which is a non-violent, self-sufficient, awakened to its capabilities, and can address the local issues as an independent self-governing village. Gram Swaraj is not about the restoration of the old village Panchayats but the new formation of independent village units of Swaraj in the context of the present-day world. This thought was well incorporated by the framers of our constitution in part IV of the constitution which contains Directive Principles of State Policy in which there is a provision for the organization of village panchayats, thereafter the 73rd constitutional amendment has provided a strong foundation for the participation of citizens at the local level and thereby strengthening grass-root level democracy in India.

Gram panchayats provide a chance for rural people a direct say in the governance and address different issues in the villages, it is a platform that is provided by the constitution for citizens to elaborate on their problems and to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the local community. In the current scenario, the gram panchayats are quite relevant in the all-around transformation of the villages in multiple ways, this is because every village has a specific requirement of infrastructure, economic opportunities, and different social issues which can be addressed by only those who are well-versed in these aspects.

The Gram Panchayats have a very positive role to play in the environmental and health issues as the villages

owing to lack of awareness are vulnerable and can be easy victims of health issues such as epidemics and other life-threatening and lifestyle diseases. Health issues have a direct impact on economic opportunities and productivity of a particular individual, the basic cause of concern is the diseases that occur due to lack of awareness and basic hygiene these diseases often lead to loss of life, but this can be prevented if the gram panchayats are proactive in spreading awareness, utilizing funds for the creation of basic health infrastructure.

Incorporation of Technology in the present working of the local governance will give huge benefits to rural inhabitants in the delivery of services of the government and will augment them with schemes of central and state government, technology will provide a greater degree of quality of life which a resident of village aspires and usually move to cities in search of better life and opportunity, creation of infrastructure such as CSC's and connecting gram panchayats (BHARATNET) with internet can make local governance much more easy and transparent.

Hence, the development of Gram Panchayat will lead to the development of the country as a whole as greater participation of people will ensure more transparency and better decision-making at the grass root level. Hence, the development of gram panchayat will lead to the development of the country as a whole as greater participation of people will ensure more transparency and better decision-making at the grass root level³⁸. The following are some of the recommendations for the effective functioning of gram panchayats:

- a. To ensure the effective functioning of the gram panchayats, it is very essential to make gram Sabha vibrant, which ensures transparency, and accountability in panchayat functioning, through a vibrant gram Sabha we can achieve Sustainable Development Goals rural level, a vibrant gram Sabha which is increasing frequency of Gram Sabha, formation and follow up of agenda is bound to provide momentum as engines of socio-economic development.
- b. Gram Panchayats in its path towards economic development, one of the hindrances which are constantly observed is the lack of adequate financial

38 D. Narayana, Local Governance without Capacity Building: Ten Years of Panchayati Raj, 40 Economic And Political Weekly (EPW) 2822, 2822-2826 (2005).

Shubharth Shukla, Arima Pankaj

- support from the government, with the increase in focus of imparting welfare schemes in rural areas there is a need to increase the quantum of financial devolution which will help the panchayats in functioning effectively.
- c. The Gram Panchayat development plan (GPDP) has to be convergent with the schemes of the government which is related to subjects listed in the eleventh schedule.
 - d. With the increased role being assigned to the gram panchayat it would also lead to a substantial increase in the finances of the panchayats, it is very for the central/state governments to provide hand-holding to the gram panchayats by increasing the quantum of money allocated to them.
 - e. Quality management system for gram panchayats has to be made necessary which can be a benchmark for every gram panchayat in delivering quality services to its citizens.