

# livelihoods

today and tomorrow

July 2018

## “Panchayat” Elections



### Supplements

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**'How To'** → **How to Form and Run Zilla Samakhya (District Level Federation)**

How to form and run Zilla Samakhya (District Level Federation)

RESEARCH LITERATURE

**Video Format**

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**'Kshetram'** → **Purvanchal Region**

Purvanchal region lies on the east comprising chain of northern hills. Comprising of the northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and West Bengal. It is the most densely populated area in the world. The region has rich bio-diversity in the forest. Major tea and jute production region of Khasi Panchayats lies in the South. Health region of 11 in the West & east of open forest areas and landscape architectural region in NE states.

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**'Sukshetram'** → **Goldsmiths**

Our country is a land of various crafts and communities, where every individual has his or her own way of living and producing products. Goldsmiths are one of those professional Goldsmiths have to start since early ages of India under civilization, and the presence of this craft is evident in every folklore, stories, mythological books, or historical records of various sites, and facts of history. Jewelry is much more than just a kind of aesthetic appeal for humans, rather it is considered to be the symbol of divine abundance and material blessing. This craft, jewelry making has been an endemic chain of tradition for over 5,000 years.

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**Monthly Livelihoods Update**

- Economy and Trends
- Livelihoods and Employment Enterprise
- Policies/Schemes and Initiatives
- Partnerships
- Social Issues and Others
- Updates from Weeklies

Happy Doctors! Happy Sports!

Let us fight Hepatitis!

Let us fight Trafficking!

Happy Cooperatives!

Happy Skills for Young!

Happy Friends! Population! Indigenous People! Humanity! Independence! Freedom! Being! Doing!

News and intuition says Elections are round the corner. Panchayat Elections may get postponed in Telangana due to not having data to fix BC Reservations.

Livelihoods Lens takes the e-book form and is available in two volumes. Soon, we will print and make them available to whoever wants.

Panchayats are the Local Governments with clear authority under the constitution to govern themselves. Gram sabha is the ultimate authority of governance. However, they are yet to come off age, barring a few as token examples. The urban scenario appears to be slightly better with visible higher autonomy. Panchayats from the basic tier of the 3-tier Panchayat Raj Institutions. Vaishalis, Village Republics and Ganaparishads, etc., are an age old idea of self-rule and were independent of kingdoms. Gandhi dreamt of Gram Swaraj. 73 and 74 Amendments of Constitution have reinforced the need to strengthen them. Special Provisions (PESA) have been created in scheduled areas. Traditional mechanisms have been given the status of Panchayats in some states. Willy-nilly, Panchayats are there. Living. They can thrive. They are serving the function of throwing leadership for our Parliamentary Democracy. Elections to Panchayats is big affair. While local issues may dominate, parties in action at state level may have direct involvement or proxy involvement. The money flows can be huge. Unanimous elections were seen here and there. Government rewards and the candidate contributing to the village fund are the triggers. Work with GPs is the need. Building leaders to plan and service GP is important. They offer the pillars of people's plans. In this context, 'livelihoods' has explored "Panchayat" Elections'.

The Art of Thinking Clearly by Rolf Dobelli is a classic and an enjoyable read.

Supplements: Kshetram discusses Purvanchal and Sukshetram discusses Goldsmiths.

Special Supplement: Livelihoods Update (June 2018).

Video - How to Form and Run Zilla Samakhya/District Level Federation?

Usual e-links include: VCA – Paddy (Pinakota); Subsector – The Kenyan Dairy Subsector; e-book: The Art of Thinking Clearly; v-book: Project Potential: Boosting Entrepreneurship at the Grassroot Level

With the faith and hope that you find this and evolving issues of 'livelihoods' useful, we remain.



the 'livelihoods' team



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How to (?)	How to Form and Run ZS/DLF <a href="https://youtu.be/qOGdhuahCgw">https://youtu.be/qOGdhuahCgw</a>
Kshetram	Purvanchal Region <a href="http://livelihoods.net.in/sites/default/files/pdf/kshetram_supplement_july_18.pdf">http://livelihoods.net.in/sites/default/files/pdf/kshetram_supplement_july_18.pdf</a>
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Special Supplement	Livelihoods Update <a href="http://livelihoods.net.in/sites/default/files/pdf/special_supplement_livelihoods_update_july_18.pdf">http://livelihoods.net.in/sites/default/files/pdf/special_supplement_livelihoods_update_july_18.pdf</a>

**e-links**

VCA	Paddy (Pinakota Village) <a href="http://livelihoods.net.in/sites/default/files/pdf/paddy_value_chain_analysis-pinakota- vsp.pdf">http://livelihoods.net.in/sites/default/files/pdf/paddy_value_chain_analysis-pinakota- vsp.pdf</a>
Sub-sector	The Kenyan Dairy Sub-Sector <a href="https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/2054/Omore%20et%20al-1999-Kenya%20dairy%20sector%20rapid%20appraisal.pdf?sequence=1&amp;isAllowed=y">https://cgspace.cgiar.org/bitstream/handle/10568/2054/Omore%20et%20al-1999-Kenya%20dairy%20sector%20rapid%20appraisal.pdf?sequence=1&amp;isAllowed=y</a>
e-Book	The Art of Thinking Clearly <a href="http://ketabnak.com/redirect.php?dlid=88013">http://ketabnak.com/redirect.php?dlid=88013</a>
v-Book	Project Potential: Boosting Entrepreneurship at the Grassroot Level <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcqbR1XBQ_g">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VcqbR1XBQ_g</a>

## Farm2Food Foundation

Teaching farming to children of rural Assam may sound as a futile exercise, as every household here has been practicing agriculture, since time immemorial. But some organizations work with a vision for the future, rather than fire fighting in the present. Farm2Food Foundation (F2FF) is one such organization, which has decided to deal with the future through their activities. They encourage students to practice organic farming in the school premises, which could equip the students to stay self reliant in a world of market driven consumerism.

Farm2Food Foundation stepped in to government schools of Golaghat and Jorhat districts of Assam in 2012 to teach students of Class I,VII and VIII to be farm entrepreneurs or, as they call them, 'FarmPreneurs'. F2FF Team members, visits schools and work with the Farm Preneurs to make organically maintained vegetable garden in schools. A carefully crafted curriculum, which focuses on farming, entrepreneurial and soft skills, leads the way for garden formation and maintenance. Kids are taught about food security, nutrition and entrepreneurship through food production.

The programme starts with a session, where the students are asked about their 'Dreams'. A platform is given to them to be loud about, what they want to do? When they grow up. During these discussions, the idea of eating healthy and staying self reliant are introduced to the kids. Work for the garden starts with vermicompost preparation in the school. Children bring the required materials for vermicompost and prepare it by themselves under the guidance of F2FF staff.

In the garden they raise beds, made in different geometrical shapes, not just because it is fun, but also helps them o learn the concepts of measurements like length, area, volume etc. Once the beds are ready, they sow seeds. The seeds are usually collected through BeejDaanYatra in the village. This helps them to connect with the elders in the community in terms of farming activities. Along with local seeds, they get guidance and help from the villagers. Local varieties of vegetables are promoted in the garden.

As the plants start growing, the garden turns out to be a science laboratory for the students. They learn how plants grow and



how sunlight, water, butterflies, bees, earthworms etc are helping them to grow better and faster. They use the vermicompost that they have prepared in the garden. Pests are kept away by using bio pesticide, which they prepare using locally available materials. Concept of water conservation is also taught to them in the garden. The help from the community is also sought to carry out heavy labour in the garden, like fencing the garden area.

Finally the harvest season starts. Students are excited to reap the benefits of their labour. These vegetables goes in to the mid-day meal preparations. They eat fresh,

organic vegetables. The students are informed about the nutrient content of each vegetable that they are growing and how each nutrient helps us to stay healthy. The school pays the students for the vegetables, used in the mid-day meal from the garden. The excess production is sold to the community.



Farm2Food Foundation envisions to build a prosperous and peaceful North East by promoting Farm based entrepreneurship. School Nutrition garden is the first step towards this vision. This programme gives the students the confidence to take up farming as a reliable source of profitable income and, of course for self reliance. The scientific lessons imparted in the garden helps to develop their scientific temper and inculcate habits of curiosity and experimentation. They learn the essence of cooperation, leadership, planning, hard work etc. during the journey. This makes the children confident enough to grow up into their dreams and thus create a prosperous North East. ❖

[Sandhra Jose]



## Maa Ahilya Bai Holkar Self Help Group

Maa Ahilya Bai Holkar Self Help Group (MABH- SHG) was started in 2010 by Ms Hemlata Karade in Baria Kherai near Maheshwar, Madhya Pradesh. Ms. Hemlata worked as a weaver for two years before starting this SHG with nine other tribal women, and they began contributing Rs. 100 per month with Narmada Jhabua Gramin Bank since then. All women in this group have availed loans from government. After recommendation by Gram Panchayat, a handloom work-shed (building) was constructed

\* Ms. Hemlata and a few members of group have travelled to New Delhi, Mumbai, Bhopal and Thailand to put up stalls during exhibitions with the help of government officials.

\* Since 2015, the group members are contributing Rs. 200 per month instead of Rs. 100.

\* Group members are given loans from corpus during emergencies. Out of the 10 women, 4 women have fixed deposits.



under 'Swarn Jayanti Swarojgar Yojana' free of cost. This group availed a free training on weaving Maheshwari Saree in Maheshwar, and were provided with looms; around 60% of the group members availed them for free, while the rest got them at 50% subsidy. The Maheshwari Saree's speciality is that it can be worn throughout the year irrespective of the weather, and is characterized by the distinct five stripes in the pallu and for its reversible borders.

Each individual member earns a wage of Rs. 300. However, the wages are also dependent on the design of the saree. For example:- A simple design may be woven in one day, but Zari / buti and other complicated designs take two or three days of work. Even though the wage is Rs. 300 for a single day of work, if a weaver weaves a basic design in two days working 4 – 4 hours, she will get Rs 300 only.

The SHG leader Ms. Hemlata Karade, a very dynamic and progressive woman, has intelligently kept the members together and motivated. The members of MABH -SHG have availed various socio-economic benefits by forming an SHG, which are as follows:

\* The members are developing an entrepreneurial nature in themselves.

\* The voices of these scheduled tribe women are being heard and respected.

\* They are majorly contributing to their household expenditure and due to this financial independence, they are getting a say in the decision-making process in their households.

\* They are now empowered and can leave abusive, alcoholic or adulterous husbands.

\* As their income has doubled, their standard of living has also improved. They are now able to spend more on their children's education.

\* This work doesn't require them to work under the hot sun or in hazardous conditions. So, they are less susceptible to diseases.

\* Due to flexibility of work timings, the women can take care of the children, instead of their older children, especially girls, skipping school to care for their younger siblings. ❖

## “Panchayat” Elections

Panchayats are foundations of Indian democratic system. Panchayat elections are living proof to the concept of Indian ‘Republic’ and ‘Swarajya’. This month, “livelihoods” would be exploring the concept, structure and role of Panchayats and the dynamics involved around Panchayat elections.



The Panchayati Raj System has been one of the most original and ancient system of local self governance in India guaranteeing to people the feel of the direct democracy in modern times. Gandhi’s emphasis on Gram Swarajya-direct self governance to rural masses and self reliance of villages gave legitimacy to the historical roots of Indian Panchayats. Gandhian idea finds mention in the part IV of the Indian constitution under Article 40, which puts an onus on the government to ensure organisation of Panchayati raj in the country in order to take governance down to the masses. This is possible only when the people are provided opportunities for fullest participation. Panchayat Election is that opportunity and a voice to the choices of people. On one hand, these elections are an opportunity for articulation of demands and aspirations of common people. On the other, Panchayat elections are critical in understanding the social and political dynamics of Indian Villages. They show how the social and political spheres have undergone a noticeable transformation in villages in the recent past. They present a

complex picture of social interactions, political trends, economic scenarios and cultural peculiarities. Before understanding Panchayat elections, it is necessary to have an idea about Panchayats themselves.

### Tracing the roots of Panchayati Raj System:

In a ancient times, *Janapadas* and *Mahajanapadas* showed signs of direct democracy. They have sown the seeds of modern day local self government in rural areas and are precursor to the Panchayat Raj Institutions in post Independent India. This makes India a pioneer in the direct democracy. Later, *Uttaramerur* Inscription (Circa 920 AD) from Tamilnadu gives historical description of rural self governance. The inscription gives astonishing details about the constitution of wards, the qualifications of candidates standing for elections, disqualification norms, constitution of committees with elected members, functions of those committees, power to remove the wrong doe etc. The village committees ranged from annual



## Uttaramerur Inscription (Circa 920 AD)

- \* Criterion for contesting in Election
- \* Norms for Disqualifying Candidates
- \* Committees to meet Village Needs

committee, standing committee, garden committee, tank committee, gold committee and so on. The inscription gives a picture of sound administration of village by talking about administrative, judicial, commercial, agricultural, transportation and irrigation regulations. The fact that villagers even had the right to recall the elected representative if they failed in their duty shows how much power and belief was vested in the members of the village.

In later times, when the governance was centralised or put under feudal lords, institutions at grassroots suffered a setback. On the other hand, with the dawn of city dwellings, the idea of local self governance extended to urban areas. The roots of institutionalised urban self governance can be traced back to the British rule, when it had set up a municipal corporation in Madras in 1687. Notwithstanding their efforts in urban self governance, the English proved to be a bane for Panchayati Raj System. Their prime concern was to centralise all power so as to maximise their exploitative gains without nay hindrance.

Some respite came with the efforts of Lord Ripon. Lord Ripon extended the local self government not only in urban areas but also to rural areas. He emphasized on elected members instead of nominated members and thus made the local self government democratic in character. He established local boards and placed the rural administration, public health, construction and maintenance of roads, education, prevention and fighting of epidemics and infectious diseases...etc, in their charge. These self governing institutions were given full control over the income and expenditure of the

areas under them. In 1907 Royal Commission of Decentralization laid stress on setting up and giving powers to village level Panchayats. As per the 1935 Government of India Act, all the provinces had to set up legislations to bring about peoples' representatives into local bodies. The motives of British rule and the motivation of British officers were a major roadblock to have a true grassroot democracy in British India. At the stroke of Independence, Panchayats were present in one third of all villages but they were not performing well due to a variety of reasons such as inadequate funds, planning and capacities.

### Panchayats in Independent India:

Gandhi's plea for village based governance was accepted technically in the form of Article 40 of the Indian constitution. For almost a decade after the adoption of the constitution, no efforts were put to operationalize Panchayat Raj System mandated under the Article 40. The move towards reenergising Panchayat Raj came as a compulsion to address the inadequacies of Community Development Programme (1952) and National Extension Service (1953). The search for causes of failure brought out new revelations. There was absence of people's participation in these programmes and services, and there was an absence of a suitable machinery to ensure the direct involvement of people in the initiatives. To not forego any time in implementing schemes for rural reconstruction in the country, Government of India appointed a committee under the

### *Recommendations of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee on "Democratic Decentralisation"*

- \* *Establishment of a three tier Panchayati Raj System-Gram Panchayat at Village level, Panchayat Samiti at the Block level and Zilla Parishad at the District level.*
- \* *Direct Elections for Village Panchayat and other two constituted through indirect elections*
- \* *There should be genuine transfer of power and responsibility to these democratic bodies.*
- \* *Adequate resources should be transferred to enable them to discharge their responsibilities.*
- \* *Zilla Parishad is to be mainly an advisory, coordinating and supervising body.*

chairmanship of Balwant Rai G Mehta, in 1957. The committee recommended the scheme of “Democratic Decentralisation”, which ultimately came to be known as Panchayati Raj.

In 1958, the recommendations of the committee were accepted by the National Development Council (NDC). NDC did not insist on a single rigid pattern and left it to the discretion of the states to evolve suitable patterns according to local conditions, emphasizing on having uniform underlying principles. Rajasthan was the first state to establish Panchayat Raj. It was inaugurated on October 2, 1959 in Nagaur District. Rajasthan was followed by Andhra Pradesh. By 1960, most of the states had first generation Panchayati Raj institutions. There were differences among them in terms of number of tiers, relative position of samiti and parishad, their tenure, composition, functions, finances and so on. Post 1960, there were many committees such as K Santhanam Committee on PRI Elections, GVK Rao Committee, Ashok Mehta Committee, L M Singhvi Committee etc, to examine various aspects of Panchayat Raj System.

As a result of recommendations of these committees and many others, a churning began at the highest level. The Rajiv Gandhi government realising that there were many leakages in providing services to the grassroots, introduced 64<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment in 1989 to constitutionalise Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and make them more powerful and broad based. The bill was vehemently opposed by the opposition. Finally, it could overcome the hiccups under the P V Narasimharao Government. Panchayats got a lease of new life in the form of 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 and came into force on 24<sup>th</sup> April 1993. This day is being celebrated as Panchayat Raj Diwas, as a reminder of our continued effort to strengthen our grass root institutions.

#### **The Dawn of a New Era-73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment:**

The act has been some sort of the saviour of local self government in the country. It gave life to the provision of Article 40. The act marked out the functional space of PRIs in black and white and gave less scope for ambiguity and faulty discretion. Salient features of the Act are:

1. Three tier system
2. Gram Sabha at the core
3. Uniform term of 5 years for all PRIs, thus taking away discretion of states and ensuring regularity of elections
4. 21 Years to be the minimum age for contesting elections to Panchayats
5. Creation of State Election Commission
6. Reservation of seats to women, SCs and STs

7. Constitution of State Finance Commission every five years
8. Indicative list of activities that come under the purview of Gram Panchayats (11<sup>th</sup> Schedule).

Later, in 1996, PESA (Panchayat Raj extension to Schedule Areas) Act was passed to enable self rule to bulk of the tribal population. PESA is for Schedule 5 areas. Here, Gram Sabha has more powers than those in normal areas. Then, there are autonomous district councils in the 6<sup>th</sup> Schedule Areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

The purpose of 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment is to enable PRIs to make great contributions in:

1. Developing healthy democratic traditions in the country
2. Inculcating leadership qualities among rural communities
3. Making planning for development more realistic
4. Encouraging participation of the people in planning and programming for goal oriented change
5. Reviving in the local people a spirit of responsible citizenship and self confidence
6. Bringing the local people in the mainstream of national life economically, politically and psychologically
7. Ensuring more effective implementation of development plans
8. Relieving the administrative burden of the state and central governments and
9. Increasing the legitimacy of the system of governance.

To achieve these objectives, Panchayats should represent collective will and collective wisdom of the rural community. When and how does it happen? It will be possible when Panchayats are lively. How are they lively? When they give voice to the people it caters to. That voice is VOTE. That voting right and elections are safeguarded by constitutional provisions.

### *Article 40*

*“The state shall take steps to organise village panchayats and endow them such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function has units of self government”*



### Constitutional and Legal Provisions for Panchayat Elections:

Article 243K of the Indian constitution provides for elections of Panchayats. State Election Commission is given the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls and the conduct of, all elections to the Panchayats. The 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment Act says all the members of the Panchayats in the village, intermediate and district level shall be elected directly by the people. Further, the chairperson of Panchayats at the intermediate and district levels shall be elected indirectly-by and from amongst the elected members thereof. However, the chairperson of a Panchayat at the village level shall be elected in such a manner as the state legislature determines.



Article 243D enables provision for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion of their population in the Panchayat area. It also makes provision for reservation of not less than 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the total seats to women. The act also authorises any state legislature which aims to provide reservation in favour of backward classes. Realising the importance of having women in positions of power and responsibility, many states have gone for reservation of 50% of the total states. States like Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Kerala, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamilnadu, Telangana, Tripura, Uttarakhand and West Bengal have already gone for 50% reservation of women in PRIs. Most recently in June 2018, to fulfil election campaign promise, Punjab has increased reservation for women in PRIS and urban local bodies from 33% to 50%. States like Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Goa, Jammu and Kashmir are yet to bring such legislation.

Article 243F talks about disqualification of membership and makes 21 Years as the minimum age to contest Panchayat elections. Finally, there are state Panchayat Raj Acts which fill the detailed laws, rules and regulations. They are designed to

suit local social, political, economic and cultural considerations.

### Panchayat Elections in Recent Past and Future:

There are 2, 48,621 Village Panchayats, 6307 intermediate Panchayats and 601 districts Panchayats in the country. The states have Panchayat elections at different times based on their respective tenure of 5 years. Recently, West Bengal had politically volatile Panchayat elections in May 2018 and it brought out many social and political dynamics across the villages of Bengal. There were Panchayat bypolls in Rajasthan which witnessed intense political atmosphere. In Punjab, the term of Zilla Parishads and block Samitis ends on July 9 and that of Gram Panchayats end on August 9. Elections to the PRIs in Punjab are likely to be conducted in September 2018, with the newly added provision of 50% reservation to women.

Telangana is slated to conduct Panchayat Elections in July, 2018. It has come with a new Panchayat Raj Act with very comprehensive features such as devolving funds, waste management and so on. This election is going to be a watershed as it would be giving reservation to a diverse set of depressed communities including Backward Castes, SCs, STs and women (50%). As per preliminary analysis, 34% of the sarpanch and ward member seats have been reserved for BCs, 20% for the SCs and 6% for the STs. Similarly, neighbouring state of Andhra Pradesh is likely to have Panchayat elections soon with new norms of spending for the candidates.

These elections as discussed are important elements of grassroot democracy. We have come a long way from indirectly electing our representatives to directly electing representatives even at the village level. But, many questions arise regarding the nature of Panchayat elections. Are these smooth? Are these regular? Are these elections fair? A detailed analysis is required to answer these questions.

### Issues Ailing the Fate of Panchayat Elections:

Panchayat Elections are complex, politically highly volatile and culturally very sensitive to rural communities. Some of the issues affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of Panchayat elections are:

#### 1. Party Politics:

Panchayat elections are supposed to be fought on non party basis. But it's an open secret that contestants are backed by political parties through all possible means. After the results are out, all parties claim that the candidates supported by them have won the elections. Every party feels it has high stakes in all elections including Panchayat elections. This party affiliation to local candidates results in divisive forces in our villages and hampers the peace, tranquillity and stability of village politics. It creates factions in the village, which have resulted in

unnecessary deaths witnessed across some of the states like Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, West Bengal..Etc. Recent West Bengal Panchayat elections stood out for the political violence and for intoxicating rural life.

## 2. Caste and Violence:

Phrases like “Horizontal Mobilisation”, “Social engineering” have been widely used in election discourse in recent past. This gives strength to the belief/notion that in India, people vote for their collective loyalties based on caste. This divides people on the basis of caste, subcaste, religion and as many divisions as possible, evident in the form of dalit vs non dalit, tribal vs non tribal, vanniya vs thevars, Reddy vs Kamma, Hindu vs Muslim, patels vs dalits and so on. These conflicts and divisions take the real issues away from election. It not only affects elections but also hampers the prospects of political, social and economic justice in the villages as whoever is strong dominates the village political atmosphere and reap other two benefits.

On the other side, caste is evident in the form of traditional Panchayats like Khap Panchayats, Panchayats made up of elders from higher social strata..Etc. They are detrimental to the elected bodies and they have huge say in who gets elected. This takes away the spirit of constitutionally backed Panchayat elections.

## 3. Proxy Candidates:

Representation of Women, Dalits and Adivasis gets subdued due to strong institutional and social barriers. To address this issue 73<sup>rd</sup> amendment act explicitly provides for the reservation of seats to these vulnerable groups. Though this is effective to some extent, the problem of traditionally dominant groups using these vulnerable groups as puppets and proxies is a grave reality. This is clear from the unofficial roles like “Mukhiya Pati” and “Sarpanch Pati” taken by the husbands of women elected as village heads. This takes away the purpose of reservation. The incidents of protests and violence by tribal bodies in Nagaland over 33% reservations for women in urban bodies have once again highlighted the issue of women and representation.

## 4. Money and Muscle Power:

Influence of money is not just restricted to assembly elections and general elections. It seems to flow even in the local body

elections. There are instances where seats of Panchayat are bought to win unanimously or voters are influenced by disbursing cash and kind. Nexus between village level leaders, MLAs and MPs makes it hard to tackle the issue of money influence in village elections. Association for Democratic Reforms, which analyses elections is actively analysing the spending in Panchayat elections and also is scrutinising the financial, educational and criminal records of candidates. This is a welcome sign.

## 5. Questionable Eligibility Criteria:

States are at their own discretion to decide some qualification or eligibility criteria to contest in elections. There have been some criteria like two child norm, having toilet facility at home and son. But some eligibility criteria have come under extreme public scrutiny. One such is law by Haryana government which put minimum education qualifications for contesting in local body elections, where men from the general category had to be matriculates and women must have passed at least class VIII (for SC men it is class VIII and for SC women, it is class V). This raised hue and cry as it eliminated half the women, 68% of SC women and 41% SC men. Similar conditions were put by Rajasthan Panchayat Raj Act as well. Though this can be looked at as a measure to promote education and literacy, it cannot be the complete picture. Is it the fault of women who did not go to school as there was no school nearby or for parents not sending her to school as they felt girls do not need education? Is it the fault of dalit for not able to afford basic education as he/she needed more hands to feed their poor family? Is it the fault of an adivasi for not getting educated as there was no school or no teacher came to their hamlet? Is it not the onus of state to provide basic education even as mandated under the Right to Education? Systematically eliminating vulnerable groups by placing minimum educational qualifications for posts which require natural wisdom would negate the purpose of reservation and thwarts the efforts to empower oppressed communities.

## 6. Ambiguity in Judging the Performance of Panchayats:

Are Panchayats truly independent self governing institutions? Some facts suggest they are not. Firstly, there are stark contrasts among states in terms of devolution of items 29 items listed under 11<sup>th</sup> Schedule of the Indian constitution. Devolution Index, given by Ministry of Panchayat Raj ranks states with regard to devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to the PRIs. When they are not devolved adequately (with essential legal safeguards), which is the case with many states, it becomes difficult to evaluate the performance of the Panchayats in elections.

Secondly, as economic survey 2018 has pointed out, rural local governments rely overwhelmingly (about 95%) on devolution.

जो बाटें दारू, साड़ी, नोट।  
उनको कभी न देंगे वोट।।



## 11th Schedule

### 29 Subjects that are to be devolved from State to Local Governments

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

That means they collect only 5% of their total financial resources. There are vast differences here as well, where states like Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh collect some direct taxes and own tax revenue, bigger states especially Uttar Pradesh depend entirely on transfers.

If this is the case, the elected representatives of PRIs have responsibility and a role to fulfil without adequate taxing powers. This in a way violates the basic principle of democracy “No taxation without Representation”.

But things are moving to the brighter side as time passes by.

### Rays of hope for Grass Roots:

Firstly, the finances have improved significantly with the recommendations of 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission. It has awarded over Rs 2 lakh crore to the Panchayats for 2015-20, which is more than three times the grant of 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission. 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission’s grant is only for Gram Panchayats while that of 13<sup>th</sup> was for all three tiers. This results both financial power and responsibility being kept in the hands of PRIs. It makes it easier for people to evaluate the performance during elections.

Secondly, money power in Panchayat elections is being tackled gradually. One measure is digitisation of records which has brought transparency and accountability and reduced scope for corruption and resultant spending in elections.

Thirdly, schemes such MGNREGS are breaking the barriers of caste which has been a permanent feature of village politics. In some cases, economic empowerment of women, SCs, STs through SHG movement has increased their political awareness and participation. This has been the case with Kudumbasree in Kerala, where women started to participate more in politics affecting their lives. Even in other states, SHG women are increasingly becoming social force and a huge vote bank.

Fourthly, continuous scrutiny in the form of social audits and judicial supervision is ensuring representatives are compelled to function as required.

Fifthly, 50 % reservation in many states and planned 10 year term for women representatives is truly a ray of hope. Along with this women are coming out of the shadows of patriarchy and are speaking and acting their mind in the local bodies. This would go a long way in bringing gender diversity in Panchayat elections.

### Journey Ahead:

As Robert Frost says “ The woods are lovely, dark and deep, but I have promises to keep, and miles to go before I sleep, and miles to go before I sleep....”, even Panchayats and their elections have long way to go. The prospects are promising especially with state election commissions improving their capacities to conduct free and fair elections. A model code of conduct with legal backing has the potential to reduce incidents of violence, money and muscle power in elections. More than all these institutional measures, political awareness of voters and training of candidates, representatives can help turn the tide in local body elections. Let us wish for strong roots for the great Indian Democracy and travel tirelessly towards achieving the objectives of our preamble “We, the People of India.....to secure to all its citizen: Justice: Social, Economic and Political; Liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship; Equality of status and opportunity.....” ❖



**Can you introduce yourself?**

My name is Veerendra Singh Butula. I am 45 years old and I am an illiterate. My native village is Khurur, Agastyamuni block, Rudraprayag district of Uttarakhand.

**Can you tell us about your Family?**

I live with my wife and two children in Rudraprayag. My wife is a home maker. I have one daughter and one son, both are studying 10th class at Rudraprayag. I have three brothers, but they all are living separately with their family. My father passed away 8 years back. I am the only income holder in my family.

**What is your Occupation?**

I have been working as a wage labour, since 20 years in different districts of Uttarakhand. But now I have become Mistri, a skilled labour. I am getting Rs. 500 per day for my work, but the income is not permanent.

**What are the challenges you face?**

In the month of March 2018 I got paralyzed on left side of the body, called Hemiplegia. As a result I was not able to undertake activities of daily living. My wife Aarti Devi with the help of villagers took me to Srinagar Base hospital. After spending 2 weeks at Srinagar hospital and incurring Rs. 25,000 for the treatment my condition was not getting better. Some people of my village, suggested my wife to take me to Kedarghati Elders Village (KeV) established by HelpAge India at village Giwala, Rudraprayag for the treatment specially physiotherapy. This health centre was established by HelpAge India after 2013 Uttarakhand disaster and has become famous for treatment of paralyzed in Uttarakhand

I came to the health centre with my wife and my relatives on 25.03.2018. We booked one room in health centre which was provided free of cost by the organization and from next day my treatment was started at the Physiotherapy department of the Health Centre headed by physiotherapist Ranglal Yadav.

He gave me and my wife a confidence that I will be good in one month. After the treatment of physiotherapy, exercises and follow-up I am now recovering from the previous stage. Now, I am able to walk and undertake regular work without any support.

**Do you available Government entitlements?**

I have a Ration card, Aadhar card, voter id and bank account. Besides this I am not getting any other entitlements from the government

**What are your future goals?**

My future goal is to restart my livelihoods activity and support my family. ❖

[Chaitanya Upadhyaya]

**Can you introduce yourself and your family?**

I am Dhanweswari Sahu, 24 years old and native of Kurna Village, Umardah Cluster, Narharpur Block, Kanker district, Chhattisgarh state. I have completed B.Sc. I belong to OBC category. My husband has a Kirana shop in my village and he also seasonally engages in agriculture. Ours is a joint family .

**What are you doing at present?**

Presently, I am working as a CRP-EP (Community Resource Person- Enterprise Promotion) under SVEP project in Narharpur block. As a part of my job, I participate in the SHG/VO/CLF meetings, orient the members about SVEP programme, and also facilitate entrepreneurs to become successful. I interact with the emerging entrepreneurs and assist them in filling loan applications for starting or supporting their enterprises. I help existing entrepreneurs in making their business plans and also teach them how to do book keeping. Till date, I have supported 22 existing entrepreneurs and 18 new enterprises to scale up their business by availing loan from BRC. I have helped 40 entrepreneurs in filling loan applications.

**Where did you work before this project?**

Before joining SVEP Project, I had been a housewife and used to help my husband in his Kirana shop. After graduation, I started looking for a job in nearby villages to supplement our family income. Soon, I came to know about SVEP project and saw working in Enterprise development as an opportunity not only to enhance my skills in the domain and help entrepreneurs. I joined the project in October 2016.

**Did you participate in training programs?**

I received a 13-day training on Enterprise Development, Business Plan and Roles & Responsibilities of CRP-EP, PIP and Growth Plan at block and district level. The training enhanced my confidence and made it easy to deal with community specifically on enterprise related issues.

**Do you face any problems?**

Initially, it was very hard to work with the community and existing entrepreneurs. I had to continuously interact and disseminate information to the SHGs at village level to identify the entrepreneurs who need financial and enterprise development support. Another major challenge was in getting accurate information from entrepreneurs as most of the entrepreneurs hid various information related to their enterprises. Sometimes, I had to travel on cycle to reach other villages in the block for project related activities. Nowadays, I go with my husband for SVEP related tasks.

**What is your future goal?**

I want to help people from overcoming poverty through entrepreneurship, and also want to scale up the enterprises in my block. ❖

## Can you introduce yourself?

My name is Heeralal Patidar. I am from Boliya Bujurg village, Sunel block, Jhalwar district of Rajasthan state. I completed my B.Sc in Agriculture from Dr. P.D.K.V. Akola, Maharashtra and PG Diploma in Rural Development Management from National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD), Hyderabad. My family is a joint family. I have two sisters and one brother. My brother and my parents are living together in our village and are doing farming on our agriculture land (six acres). They cultivate Soybean, Wheat, Mustard, Coriander, Orange, and vegetable crops.

## What are you doing?

I am working as a Certification Manager in the Organic Certification Department of Chetna Organic Agriculture Producer Company Ltd, Hyderabad. It is a small and marginal farmers' Producer Company based in Odisha, Telangana, and Maharashtra. Chetna's vision is to create sustainable agriculture practices. I am facilitating this programme in Kalahandi district in Odisha; Yavatmal, Akola, Amravathi districts in Maharashtra; and Adilabad & Asifabad districts in Telangana. We are working with around 10000 Organic Certified Farmers; of them, 3600 are from Telangana, 4000 are from Odisha & 1500 from Maharashtra. My work is to coordinate with the certification body for seed approval. I collect information on sowing done, state-wise requirement of seed packets, purchasing of seed, testing, application for approval, inspection of seed material etc. APEDA will certify the land of farmers as organic, if farmers grow crops which are completely organic. We need to send application forms to certification body. After payment of fee, certification body inspects the crops and gives certificate if everything is according to rules. Every month, I travel between the 3 states and spend more than one week in each state for work.

**My roles and responsibilities are as follows:** Certification of land according to guidelines of Agriculture Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) & International Standard of Organic Certification; Maintenance of Internal Control System (ICS) in the states of Odisha, Maharashtra & Telangana; Documentation of all ICS at Head office and at cluster level office; Internal Inspection of all the farmers in the year; Purchasing and selling of food crops (pulses, wheat, oil etc.) through local market in Hyderabad; Coordinating with certification body for external audit, scope for renewal; Checking of Trace net entry of all the farmers in online software and submission to Certification body; Responsible for data checking in Trace net software for three states of 10000 farmers; Organic Certificate audit and documentation; GOTS (expand) auditing and Documentation; Checking compliance criteria of both the units according to factory rules and regulations; Fair-trade Certification; Maintenance and development of MIS software; Giving training to field staff.



## Can you tell us about your previous works?

I started as a Field Staff at Akshara Livelihoods between September, 2013 to January, 2014 for ICRISAT Livelihood value chain analysis in Jodhpur district, Rajasthan where I have done the household survey of Govindpura village and analysed value chain of different crops. During the study, I conducted Livelihoods Enhancement Action Plan (LEAP) along with the team. As part of LEAP, prepared social and resource map with villagers, collected data about the village, livelihoods mapping of the village, income and expenditure analysis, Traded In and Traded Out, 24 hours analysis, 365 days analysis, seasonality analysis, value chain analysis for different agriculture produces, Institution analysis through Venn diagram, local market analysis and schemes.

## Did you receive or give any trainings and workshops?

I have conducted training for field staff and project coordinator in Odisha and Maharashtra about Organic Certification rules and regulations; Training to Field staff on Pre Season, Mid Season and Post season activities of farming; I have attended Farmers to Farmers Extension training in MANAGE, Hyderabad, which provides the details of agriculture extension techniques and how to transmit it to farmers; Provided training to internal inspector on conducting inspection; Identifying Training Need Assessment (TNA), Micro Enterprises and Conducting of EAP (Entrepreneur awareness Program) in the area of operation (Village Profile Mapping, Interacting with youths of different villages for Training Need Assessment (Identifying Gaps), Conducting Entrepreneurship Awareness Program (EAP) at Panchayat Level to aware youth for different livelihood options.)

## Do you face any issues?

Sometimes, the field-staff don't update the head office about information on any changes to the programme.

## Who monitors your work?

My organization's CEO monitors on my work regularly.

## Can you tell us about your achievements?

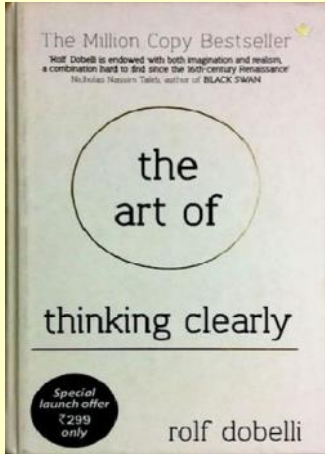
In Chetna Organic, I enrolled 3000 Farmers in Organic certification; they are certified according to NPOP & NOP standards; Created Internal control System for all the 22 ICS operated in Odisha, Telangana and Maharashtra; Started retail sale of food crops in Hyderabad; Maintained MIS database from last 4 years; Prepared training manuals for Farmers, field staff, Project coordinators etc; Conducted 100% yearly Internal Inspection of all farmers; Maintained documentation of all ICS in Head office and district Office.

## What is your vision?

I want to work for development of small and marginal farmers using sustainable natural methods. ❖

Classic

# The Art of Thinking Clearly



Rolf Dobelli has written “The Art of Thinking Clearly”. It is a compendium of collected notes from many books, articles and personal narratives of incidents and experiments by social psychologists who have been working for decades in social psychology. This writer interacted with many cognitive social scientists and large number research scholars to understand systematic errors in thinking pattern. In the process, the writer being a novelist, became a good student of social and cognitive psychology. The book “The Art of Thinking Clearly” focuses on simple errors in day - to - day thinking, analysis of the causes behind the errors in thinking and how to identify the errors in thinking and also it describes the errors how they are the results of the evolved patterns. The book explains that the errors in thinking are not just casual mistakes but are systematic errors

which deviate from logic and rationale, reasonable thought and behaviour. The book is divided into 99 small chapters which are of two to three pages. The writer clearly mentions that, this list is not complete, errors are interconnected and this work is a result of researchers who worked for decades in the subjects of behavioural and cognitive errors. This book provides knowledge, understanding and gives best insights to recognize and avoid mistakes in thinking. It is a best book for everyone who wants to know social psychology and decision making patterns and try to come out from the mistakes in decision making in personal and professional life. ❖

	Latest
	<p><b>Book Name:</b> Rural Development and Livelihoods in India</p> <p><b>Author:</b> Niranan Sahoo</p> <p><b>Publisher:</b> INDIGO Books</p>
	<p><b>Book Name:</b> Determinants Of Livelihood Outcomes of Migration</p> <p><b>Author:</b> Savitree Patidar</p> <p><b>Publisher:</b> Himanshu Publications</p>

Story

## A Blank Question Paper

One day, a professor entered the classroom and asked his students to prepare for a surprise test. They waited anxiously at their desks for the test to begin. The professor handed out the question paper with the text facing down as usual. Once he handed them all out, he asked his students to turn the page and begin. To everyone’s surprise, there were no questions, just a black dot in the center of the page. The professor seeing the expression on everyone’s faces, told them the following, “I want you to write what you see there.” At the end of the class, the professor took all the answer papers, and started reading each one of them aloud in front of all the students. All of them with no exceptions described the black dot, trying to explain its position in the middle of the sheet etc. After all the papers had been read, the classroom was silent. The professor began to explain, “I am not going to grade on you this, I just wanted to give you something to think about. No one wrote about the white part of the paper. Everyone focused on the black dot and the same happens in our lives. We have a white paper to observe and enjoy, but we always focus on the dark spots. We always have reasons to celebrate; nature renewing itself every day, our friends around us, the job that provides our livelihood, and the miracles we see every day. However, we insist on focusing only on the dark spots, the lack of money, the complicated relationship with a family member, the health issues that bother us, the disappointment with a friend etc. The dark spots are very small compared to everything we have in our lives, but they are the ones that pollute our minds. Take your eyes away from the black spots in your life. Enjoy each one of your blessings, each moment that life gives you. Be happy and live a life positively!”

Moral: As the professor explained, life is a mixed bag of good and bad things. We all have positives and negatives along the way, but we must always concentrate more on the positives for leading a healthy and happy life. Life goes on no matter what, so do not waste your time thinking about the negatives! ❖ [Link: <https://www.moralstories.org/blank-question-paper>]





# ‘Yoga’kshemam

Doctors! Cooperatives! Population! Youth Skills! Friends!

Let us fight Hepatitis! Let us fight Trafficking!

Indigenous People! Humanity!

Independence! Freedom! Being! Doing!

Rest in Peace, Venkat Ramani!

Remembered Erich Fromm. The Art of Loving. Escape from Freedom. To Have or To Be.

Love is union while retaining the separateness and integrity of one's own self. It is "an experience of sharing and communion which permits the full unfolding of one's own inner activity. It is the experience of solidarity with our fellow creatures. What matters is the quality of loving, not the object. Out of the polarity of separateness and union, love is born and reborn. In loving I am one with All. And I remain my unique, separate, limited self. Productive love always includes care, responsibility, respect, and knowledge.

**Care:** actively concerned with the other's growth and happiness.

**Responsibility:** responding to the other's needs, expressed or otherwise.

**Respect:** relating to the other as s/he is.

**Knowledge:** knowing this person, relating to the core.

The being and having modes are competing for the spirit of humanity. The having mode relies on the possessions that a person has. It is the source of the lust for power and leads to isolation and fear. The being mode depends solely on the fact of existence and is the source of productive love and activity and leads to solidarity and joy. Responding spontaneously and productively and having the courage to let go in order to give birth to new ideas. We are all capable of both these modes.

Having and being are two fundamental modes of experience, the respective strengths of which determine the differences between the characters and various types of social character. Commitment to the having mode inevitably leads to perpetual war. The war between classes, essentially the exploiting and the exploited, has always existed in societies that were based on the principle of greed.

Loving mother offers unconditional love. Motherly love is mercy and compassion. By contrast, fatherly love depends on the achievements and good behavior of the child. Father's love can be lost, but regained by repentance and renewed submission. These two sides, the need for mercy and justice, coexist in every person. The deepest yearning of human beings seems to be a constellation in which these two poles are united in a synthesis.

The work of peasant and artisan cooperated with nature, not raping but transforming nature. On the other hand, "sacred elements" of industrial religion are work, property, profit and power. Its positive elements include: furthering individualism and freedom, within limits.

We know that Infinite growth does not fit into a finite world. We have also become aware that economy should not be the content of life. If inner spirit is neglected, selfishness takes charge, a system of love for one's fellow human beings and life loses its significance and gets diluted.

All of us have an essential inborn nature to satisfy the basic human needs of relatedness, transcendence, rootedness, identity and a frame of orientation. We create society in order to fulfil this essential nature. However, our lives are usually a compromise between inner needs and outer demands. Yet it is possible to devise such a society where freedom and spontaneity are fully attainable.

To be we need to be; productive; unalienated; relating to the world lovingly; using reason to grasp reality objectively; feeling as an unique individual; feeling one with fellow human beings; not responding to irrational authority; willingly accepting the rational authority of conscience and reason; and is in the process of being born/knowing oneself as long as one is alive.

To be, one's relationships to others in the social sphere are similar in their qualities to relationships in the private sphere. To be, we do not infringe on others rights or liberties.

To be we work together for being useful to the world; and for collective and personal fulfilment. The idea is not increased productivity or higher wages. It is living with joy/happiness, educating oneself, pursuing common endeavours of usefulness, actively related to the world. The central nature of activities include discovering, fostering, and developing human relationships.

The centrality of being is being useful to the limits of endurance. This calls for a revolution of our hearts. Incidentally this does not require new wisdom, but new seriousness and dedication.

The future of life in the Universe is in being and doing rather than in having. Having is not our basic instinct. Sharing is. Being one with nature is. Leading ourselves into being. To becoming one with our inner spirit and the spirit of the Universe. Universe conspires to help us. Our sarvendriyas take us into being. Simple meaningful fulfilling useful life.

**Let us Be. Let us go towards having nothing to have everyone. Let us be simple to have the bliss of life. Let us be stressfree. Let us live.**

This is prakritiyoga. This is life in harmony. This is life and nature flowing together.

This is kaivalyayogam.

Can we be there? **Yes, if we pursue Atma Yoga.** If we live in the present into the flow of being useful! If we live to the diktats of the inner us! If we keep flowing! If we nudge one another along! If we practice not to have! If we practice not to acquire! If we just be - love, learn, give and flow! Krsna confirms that being beings are part of Krsna himself.

Join us in the world of yoga – for life – towards Krsnayogasiddhi. You will not regret it. ❖

## G Muralidhar

