

## **A Critical Analysis of People's Participation in Local Governance and Development in Ladakh**

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Abstract:

*Local Governance is not an innovative idea but essential practices of human to fulfilling the basic facilities from centuries. Every community believed in self-determined culture and identity which regulated through local governance. The history of struggle for the autonomous status to Ladakh after Indian Independence was claiming basic right and fraternity. Self-determination is to own the decision-making processes where participation would maximize. But, even after creation of local government, slow-pace development, lagging in people participation, administrative loopholes, socio-political and religious factional have been continued in both the district of Ladakh. The challenges such as tough terrain, climate, national borders, infrastructure, transport, communication, education and health issues could be resolved through proper channels through democratic processes and maximum participation of people. The strengthening of local governance in Ladakh is pre-requisite for any solution. And cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders is the jewel to overcome from all Chimera.*

Key words: Local government, autonomy, participation, Decision-making process, empowerment, cooperation and coordination of all stakeholders, Cooperation and Coordination of all Stakeholders, Performance of local governance, Civic Culture, Development, and Power-Politics,

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## Introduction:

From raw silicon to nano sophisticated silicon, human have been flow out the river of long journey of exploration and searching for development of the mankind. Human's intellectual, inquisitive and innovative touches new opportunities in each step of civilization. The history of political Eldorado is presently trickled down to inclusive development where representation from every section is emphasized in democratic society. Participation becomes a crucial element for strengthening people power, regulating law and governance in people favour. Democracy is promoted for giving power to the people. Democratic decentralization is becoming a pre- requisite for development in any society. Decentralization promotes local level representation, solves local issues and enhances decision making power to the local people. Effective decentralization provides greater choice to the people to participate in decision making and improves efficiency in service delivery and enhances accountability.

Ontologically, Greeks were very active in participation for the City State' affairs. In India, self-dependent were existed during ancient Indian *Vedic*<sup>1</sup> period. '*Sabha*'<sup>2</sup> and '*Samiti*'<sup>3</sup> were the popular institutions through which the masses had a direct say in the village affairs (Mridula, 2010). The continuation of Vedic cultures of self-dependent was appeared till British ruled. English's Governor in India Charles Metcalfe appreciated village economic model and entitled India as little republic (Krukshetra, 2014). Gandhian model was entreating people for using local and rural resources, against the western industrial goods and products. He was strongly advocated of self-reliance, his *Satyagraha*<sup>4</sup>, way of resisting was embedded with the ethos of truth and active participation. Later, his principles were evaluated in governance through enforcement of 73<sup>rd</sup> Indian constitutional amendment Act. Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSSs) are giving adequate spaces and platforms in participations at the grass root and involvement of whole citizen in decision making processes.

Historically, in 1935 in Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh promulgated the Village *Panchayat*<sup>5</sup> *Raj*<sup>6</sup> Regulation No.1 by. In 1936, it is considered as began the history of Panchayat (Sharma, 2013). A special Department of Panchayat was initiated; Rural

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<sup>1</sup> *Vedic*: Driven from Sanskrit word *Ved* means 'to know'.

<sup>2</sup> *Sabha*: villager met for common concern under *Sabha* which means the assembly or congregation.

<sup>3</sup> *Samiti*: In Ancient Vedic Period, the villages met for common concern under *Samiti*, which means Cooperative.

<sup>4</sup> *Satyagraha*: Follow the path of truth.

<sup>5</sup> *Panchayat*: denote for institution of five members who are looking after the village's affairs and making accountable to people.

<sup>6</sup> *Raj*: Hindi Word *Raj* means to rule or govern.

Development was created to administer the 1935 regulation. The village affairs of the Panchayat were limited to civil, criminal justice, sanitation and other minimal concerned. The Regulation was amended to widen the list of functions under Village panchayat Act of 1941. The total number of villages brought under the jurisdiction of village Panchayat at the close of Samvat 1991 i.e 1942 A.D was 4717, and the total numbers of Panchayat 4375, during 1934-1944, 61 new Panchayats which was 35 in Kashmir provinces and 26 in Jammu provinces were established. The total number of Panchayat thus stood at 868 and the total number of villager brought under the jurisdiction (Sharma, 2013). The Jammu and Kashmir state government enacted the Village Panchayat 1951 Act. The Panchayat Act enforcement was restricted in scope to meet the requirements of rural uplift. The Act was, therefore revised in 1952. The main features of the revised Act were delegation of Municipal functions to Panchayats, introduction of *tehsil*<sup>7</sup> Panchayat Boards, provision of people's judicial committees at tehsil level for deciding appeals judicial funds of the Panchayat etc. The Panchayat Act 1951 A.D was revised in 1958. The village Panchayat Act No XXIII of 1958 came into force with effect from April 01, 1958. Community Development programme was assured. The Panchayat in the state continued to remain dormant even after the Indra-Sheikh Accord of 1975. Later, in 1989 Jammu and Kashmir the Panchayat Act came into existence three years before the 73rd amendment of the constitution but 73rd constitutional amendment averted in J&K due to article 370 and the Panchayat rules were framed in 1996 and Panchayati Raj amendment in 2011. Presently Panchayat Raj in Jammu and Kashmir is consisted of three tiers system that is *Halqa*<sup>8</sup> Panchayat at Halqa level, Block Development Council at block level, and District Planning and Development Board at district.

### **People's Participations in local Governance in Ladakh**

The Tibetan word La-tags, 'the mountain-Land' or 'The land of Passes' has different alias likes *Mar-Yul* (red-inhabited land), *Ma-lo-pho* (red land), *Kie-chhan-pa* (Snow-land), moon-land, land of Lamas and little Tibet etc. Present Ladakh have two districts (Kargil and Leh) is driven by rural populations of 76 percent (Census 2011, GOI). Ladakh is located in northern India in Jammu and Kashmir State which is geographically at high altitude, dissert mountains, remote to mainstream India, two International boundaries with Chinese occupied territories and Pakistan occupied territory. The basic livelihood of the people is agriculture and animal husbandry (Beek, 2000), modern days is supplemented by tourism, service and

<sup>7</sup> *Tehsil*: Administrative division of the South Asia.

<sup>8</sup> *Halqa*: Urdu word of group of villages.

business hub in Kargil and Leh town etc. Ethically, the land has been ridden through multiple believed based on cravens who settled in Ladakh, rulers who ruled Ladakh, and preachers who pervaded their faiths among the people. Presently Tibetan Buddhist and Islam are two major faiths followed by Hindu, Christians and Sikh etc,

From Centuries ago, the land of Ladakh was a rendezvous for rulers, messengers, cravens and silk routes traders, the vibrant of political governance existed from Skitde-Nemagon's (975-990 A.D) first establishment of central administration in Ladakh. Then Namgyal Dynastic (1470-1836) ruled to Dogra (1836- 1947) till Indian independence (Dawan, 2011). In every stages of ruled the vitality of self- reliance, participative governance, and self- governance were said to be common practiced. But, nation- state identities had restricted the transaction of people, goods and material from crossroad of high-Asia. In the modern state system it has diluted its ancient vitality, the self-reliance's Ladakh had turned into dependable region to mainstream India with isolated both natural and human demarcation of international borders.

Ladakh in the post Indian Independence, have been gradually dissenting the Kashmir administration for step motherly treatment in Jammu and Kashmir State by demanding Union Territory status by Leh based socio-political movement. The autonomous status in Ladakh meant for formulating the local policies and implementing the local, state and national policies, programmes and schemes independently. Since, Ladakh is located at the critical junction in every sphere from physically, climate, culture, strategically and linguistically. There is strong needed of self-determination to consider its problems through the local unit and to strengthen the nation building. Their vision had to proper development in every aspect without any marginalization has entails the LAHDC (Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council) status to Leh district in 1995. In Kargil district, it has been established in 2003 during Mufti Government in J&K. LAHDC as an independent body has authority to implement the plans and policies of district's programmes and schemes for the development of Ladakh. The autonomous government has power and function to use and occupation of the land vested in the council, formulation and review of developmental programme for the district, formulation of guidelines for implementation of schemes at the grass root level, promotion of languages and culture of the area, management of un-demarcated forests, management of canals or water courses for agriculture, tourism planning, promotion, and development. The council has extensive rights to levy and collect local taxes and fees of all sorts, including on grazing, business, transport, entertainment, 'temporary occupation of village sites, roads, etc.

Simultaneously, there are numbers of central and state sponsored schemes which are mostly implementing through Panchayat Raj Institutions system for the developmental works. The Centrally Sponsored Schemes are playing a crucial role in helping to ensure that villages are equipped with all basic amenities and facilities. In addition, sources like BADP (border villages), opportunities to accelerate the pace of progress under various themes. Although, LAHDC as an autonomous body has greater roles to make visions, regulate the plans and policies, can make links and nexuses with governmental agents, semi- governmental agents, and non -governmental organizations for development and welfare for the society of Ladakh. Its order and authority have helpful to maintain the society peace, prosperity and secure. LAHDC is supreme platform for achieving every parts of development from mass mobilization, political participation, orderly rule, promotes growth and development. On the other hand, Panchayati Raj Institutions is maximizing the people's participation in decision-making processes. People enjoy the Panchayat as politically neutral body to regulate village affairs and formulate the plans and policies to strengthen grass-root socio-economic and rural governance.

The modern institutions of Ladakh have unable to fulfill its requirement as per constitutional provisions and guidelines in terms of proper infrastructures, education system, health, transport and communication further social capital and social networks element are in slow pace growth. The sparsely settled populations and scatter vast region with rug dissert mountains creates snail-pace development even in providing basic facilities. In the developmental approaches of Ladakh, the region is facing some basic lacunae in the every sphere; some of major reasons are weak communication and transport system, geographical and environmental hurdle, unprivileged condition in Rural Ladakh etc. Some political leaders of Ladakh argued that the expenditure of one remote village political campaign in Ladakh is equivalent to political campaign of Chandini Chowk in Delhi which is one constituency. Likewise, to run the Ladakhi administration is equivalent to one toughest nation where every stakeholders are needed to involve into allocating the services with healthy cooperation and coordination.

Politically, electoral behaviors of people impacts on the developmental processes and people orientation in politics. Political parties have molded the people orientation in local politics. The repercussion of modern civic culture in Ladakh is diluting the constitutional provision of welfare concept, Gandhian vision of self rule in Ladakh has transmogrified into dependent system on Governments' funds in every activities of village which were done through voluntary in traditional system. Politics of vote bank by political parties has deteriorated the

social relations (Beek, 2000), further political ideologies trickled down in every activity of village's affairs creates more hindrance in developmental processes. Therefore, the local institution like Panchayat is essentially required to be politically neutral body.

Power-politics in Ladakh is weakening the political socialization. Civic culture is tainted due to citizens are unaware of their rights and duties. Elections in Ladakh are manipulated through religious identity, money, muscles, and other irregularities (Chosjor, 2007). The control over voting right is directly impact on the participation of people in decision-making processes. Elites of Ladakh are increasing their roles in democratic directions for their vested interest, where few business classes are making inroads in rule over the whole society. There are rising complains from the common people that the political-business nexuses of some leaders entails to control over the public natural resources from lands to mountains. In these cases, the dissenters are suppressed by influenced power holders.

Ladakh, as a region is signified as unique land with one identity that is Ladakhi. But, within the region conflicts occurred in the name of religion and regions, Kargil and Leh districts are divided by two super-structure ideas of demanding Greater Ladakh and Union Territory status. In both Kargil and Leh districts, the sectarian, regions and religions divided of people developmental approaches.

Participation not necessarily signified for enjoying the adult suffrage, it streak into glean of discuss for the solutions of the problems occurred in villages regarding village affairs. In the prospectus of rural development in Ladakh, people are victims of deteriorating the crops; the urea is affecting people health and fertile soil. Unemployment is rising high, remote area is facing from medical facilities; there are rising of urban migration, climate change lead to drinking water and irrigation problems etc.

Economically, rural Ladakh generate their economy on the basis of agriculture and animals rearing, the service sectors and tourism are new ways to get employed. The local people can generate the revenues through utilization of their resources sustainably, although the challenges have to face up in climate change, water scarcity, migration, and degradation of fertile soil.

Socially, the marginalized sections of society caste victims, unprivileged people, down trodden and women are reported as victims in participation in social life. Caste ridden society continuously existed in Ladakh, this community deprived from many social rights. Women right appears at the community level, the initial roles of family pattern become replica at community based functioning. Women social activists in Ladakh slammed for male dominating roles at village level functionaries. Some disparities between man and women do

exist in the peripheral regions of Ladakh. According to Baseline Survey on minority in India, female work participation in Leh district is below than national average. History witnessed that the results of General Council's elections held in Kargil and Leh that all the 26 elected seats of the council are occupied by men. In 2011 Panchayat Elections there were no Sarpanch<sup>9</sup> were elected in both the districts. This shows that there is lack of support for women to be in policy and decision making positions in Ladakh.

LAHDC as the helmsmen of the Ladakh, steer all the administration of Kargil and Leh districts. The sole responsibility of local government is to carry equally with inclusive and efficient. LAHDC considered that Panchayat Raj Institution as people's institutions for development at grassroots. It is believed that effective decentralization to PRI will not only promote local ownership of development process but also strengthen the role of LAHDC. There are 187 Halqa Panchayats, 30 Councilors (each in Kargil and Leh), 4 MLAs (leh.nic.in) and 01 M.P to Lok Sabha etc. 1.47 and 1.33 thousands population in Kargil and Leh district (Census2011.co.in) are governed by the all elected leaders for development of Ladakh. There are numerous Civil Society Organizations are supplementing the efforts for various fields and helping to make Ladakhi villages a better place to live (Gyurja, TATA-LAHDC, MLP, 2010:13). Whereas institutions like Defence Institute of High Altitude Research and Sher-e-Kashmir University of Sciences and technology are helping with their Research and Development's works. The implementer agents of government and non-government of local governance should be promoted by both LAHDC and Panchayat.

### **The roles of various institutions in development of Ladakh:**

Regarding the roles of institutions in development of Ladakh, as other society, it has also nexuses of various organizations to solve the certain issues from every side including government, non-government, and voluntary organizations. In the recent history, both formal and informal organization involved to develop the society. Formally; the government improves economic infrastructures by maintenance and metallic link roads, Ration Store, Panchayat *Ghar* (House), Community Hall, dispensaries, construction of footpath. In social sector: awareness campaign, improving quality of education, provisions of adequate infrastructure, financials and capacity building support to women's SHGs. In some informal contributions in development of Leh- Ladakh, such as introducing English medium syllabus in Leh- Ladakh by Operation New Hope, the Guinness book of world records in 90,000

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<sup>9</sup> *Sarpanch*: is head of *Panches* in village. 'Sar' means head and 'Panch' means five appointed members of village.

plantations in one hours in August 2010 in Stakna villages, the movement of ‘live to love’ by Galwang Drukpa (<http://www.livetolove.org/>), Go Green, Go Organic in Changthang- Lalok by *Skabgon*<sup>10</sup> Chetsang Rinpochey (<http://www.gogreengoorganic.net/about.html>) for socio-economic development sustainably and environment protection, the creation of Ice Stupa<sup>11</sup> for water logging in 2015 (<http://icestupa.org/>)by volunteer group, Alternative University initiative by Mr Sonam Wangchuk (<http://hial.co.in/>)etc, are the some random selections of the exemplary roles to show in bringing society towards development through the cooperation from all sides in development and governance. Although there have been ebbs and flows in developmental aspect in Ladakh. The traditional Ladakh as developed unsystematically but their development has its own structure and function, which has conveyed proper meaning and framework. As Helena Norberg- Hodge (Hodge, 1991: 55) said about ‘an un-choreographed dance in the case of a family working system, in which work is done thoroughly without division of works’. In the intervention of state system the modern institutions are replacing to maintain social rules and regulation. Formally, every developmental part has done through departmental, Panchayati Raj Institutions, LAHDC- Leh, Semi-Governmental organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations, and other Associations and communities etc. Both formal and informal institution has played equal roles in both up and down of social position. Both central and State government has implemented numbers of schemes, programmes, and Yojanas to uplift the society.

There are also numbers of institutions who are playing a crucial role in the development of the society. The family, religion, association, community, school, university, NGO, government, Civil Society, and Volunteer etc. the basic things of the all is to develop society in a better position without marginalizing and discriminations. Till dates the role of LAHDC is considered to be positive role in equal development in all regions of Ladakh by including every means of resources to pay off the people demands and shared. One example is the Economic Review of 2014-15 of Leh district shown that in transport out of 112 villages, 109 stands (Economic Review: 27) connected with the motorable road are expected to connect.

The strengthening of the rural governance is the solutions through active participation of people. Providing basic facilities is the prerequisite condition. Jammu and Kashmir’s Government has provided numerous methods applied to maximum participation of the rural

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<sup>10</sup>*Skabgon*: spiritual head of the sect in Buddhism.

<sup>11</sup> Ice Stupa: cone shaped artificial frozen ice, for the purpose of using water in spring season for plantations when water is in scarcity which is initiated in Ladakh.

people. There should be active eyes in every decision making process and also in every village under the headman-ship of *Sarpanches, Panches*<sup>12</sup> and senior citizens, a general discussion and debate over the issue of fund disbursement and utilization of the resources may call-up on monthly basis. The local Governance should be beyond the political parties ideologies and participative irrespectively without any discrimination. The block officials should reveal and inform every governmental plan, *yोजना* (Plan), scheme and decision to the public. It will be a welcome gesture, if the block administration voluntarily takes onus to protect citizens' right, while ensuring accountability, creating transparency and fostering the value of good governance. The engagement of people themselves in the goal setting, formulating plans and implementing development projects are becoming prerequisite in participative governance. Consequently, such an arrangement will have equal benefit for both administration and the people. While people could get actual need through bottom-up policies, administration could control over the policies, law and order on top-down lines at ease. Keeping this in view, the extension, devolution and implementation of grass root level democracy, self-dependence society and participative governance in rural villages of J&K is required to be more realistic than rhetoric. However, those high handed political elites and political contractors at their best to extract public resources for their own interest must be challenged, defeated and censured in the strongest possible term. The best answer could be found well among today's new generation who will then through their affirmative action be proven as the guardian of our resources and inculcate progressive political culture in the region.

### **Conclusion:**

The mechanism of the LAHDC and Panchayat Raj Institutions has yet many things to be achieved. The lack of empowerment, legislative power, and the loose coordination among Panchayati, State Government, and Council seem to be the reason for not satisfactory works done which set in the plans, policies, and vision of the Council. There is very substantial to trickle down various powers to the Council from the State as well as Central Government to make effective in the developmental process and strengthen the local institutions. LAHDC of Kargil and Leh still needed to make efficient Act and constitution which will properly demarcate the structure, power, function, and jurisdiction among Council, Panchayati, and other Department.

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<sup>12</sup> *Panch*: looking after village under instruction of the *Sarpanch*.

The administrative structure and function needs to be transformed, the official should be client oriented and government should be services provider in nature. There should be proper mechanism of full flagged administrative system and fulfilling all staff is essentially seems to be required. Civic culture in the society urgently needed to inculcate. The cooperation, coordination and collaboration among stakeholders are keys to development.

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