

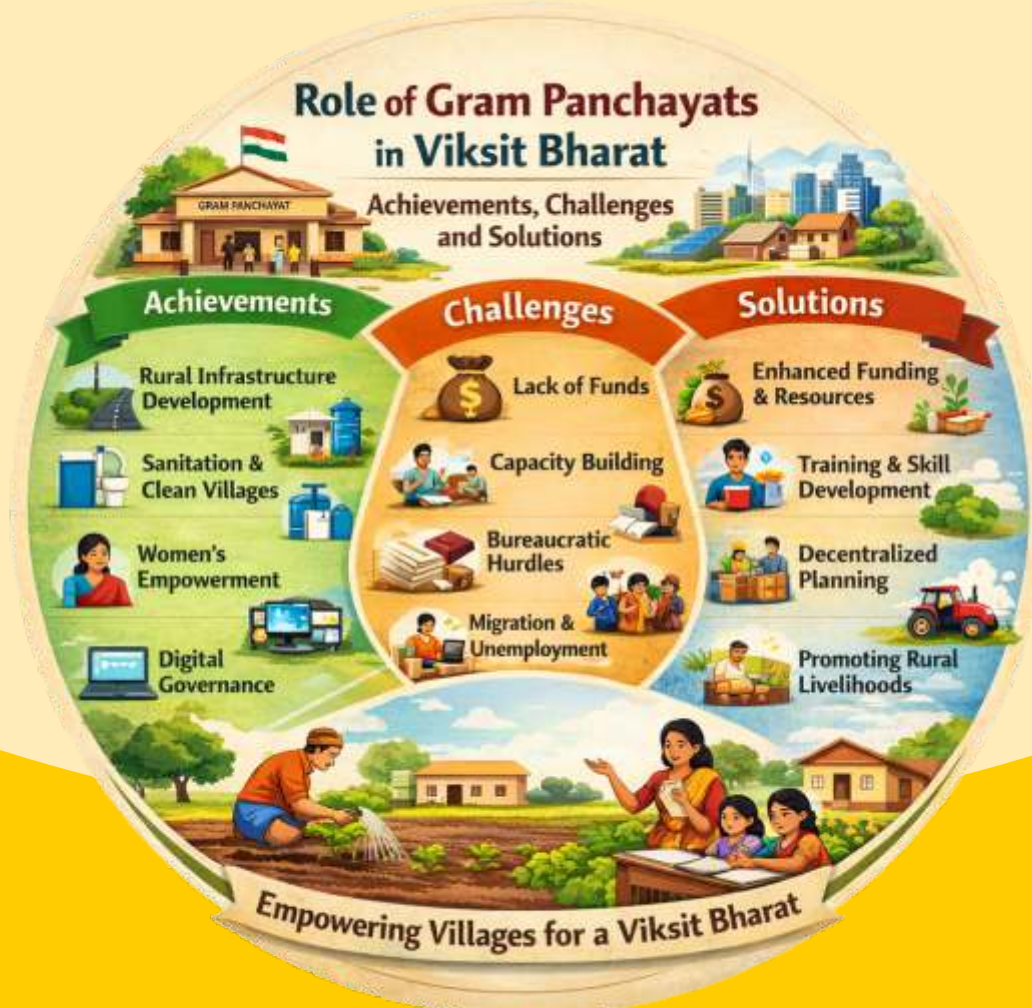


CENTRE FOR MULTI-DISCIPLINARY DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH (CMDR), DHARWAD

(A National Institute of Research, Teaching and Training, supported by Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR), Ministry of Education, Government of India and Government of Karnataka)

A Two Day National Seminar on

Role of Gram Panchayats in Viksit Bharat @ 2047: Achievements, Challenges, and Solutions



Organized by:
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November 20-21, 2025

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1. Background and Rationale

The vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 aspires to achieve, inclusive build a development of the nation. At the heart of this vision lies the Gram Panchayat the first tier of democratic governance and the institution of the people. As the principal agents of grassroots democracy, Panchayats are entrusted with planning, implementing welfare programmes, mobilizing resources, and ensuring participatory governance. Strengthening Gram Panchayats is, therefore, central to realizing equitable growth, rural prosperity, and good governance in line with the national development agenda. The journey of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India, shaped significantly by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, reflects the nation's long-standing commitment to decentralization and empowerment of citizens at the grassroots. Mahatma Gandhi's vision of Gram Swaraj continues to inspire this transformation, emphasizing self-reliant villages as the foundation of nation-building. After 79 years of Independence, it is imperative to review the achievements, identify persisting challenges, and plan the way forward for stronger Panchayats as administrative and developmental pillars of rural India.

Karnataka holds a special place in India's decentralization story. Since the 1980s, it has pioneered reforms under the slogan “Power to the People”, becoming one of the first states to institutionalize genuine decentralized governance. Yet, across the country, Panchayats continue to face pressing challenges ranging from inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and gaps in capacity, issues of accountability, inclusion, and climate resilience. These challenges call for renewed efforts, innovative reforms, and collective learning to make Panchayats engines of rural transformation.

Against this backdrop, the National Seminar on “Role of Gram Panchayat in Viksit Bharat: Achievements, Challenges and Solutions” was organized to bring together policymakers, administrators, academics, civil society organizations, and elected representatives to deliberate on the evolving role of Panchayats in shaping Viksit Bharat.



2. Objectives of the National Seminars:

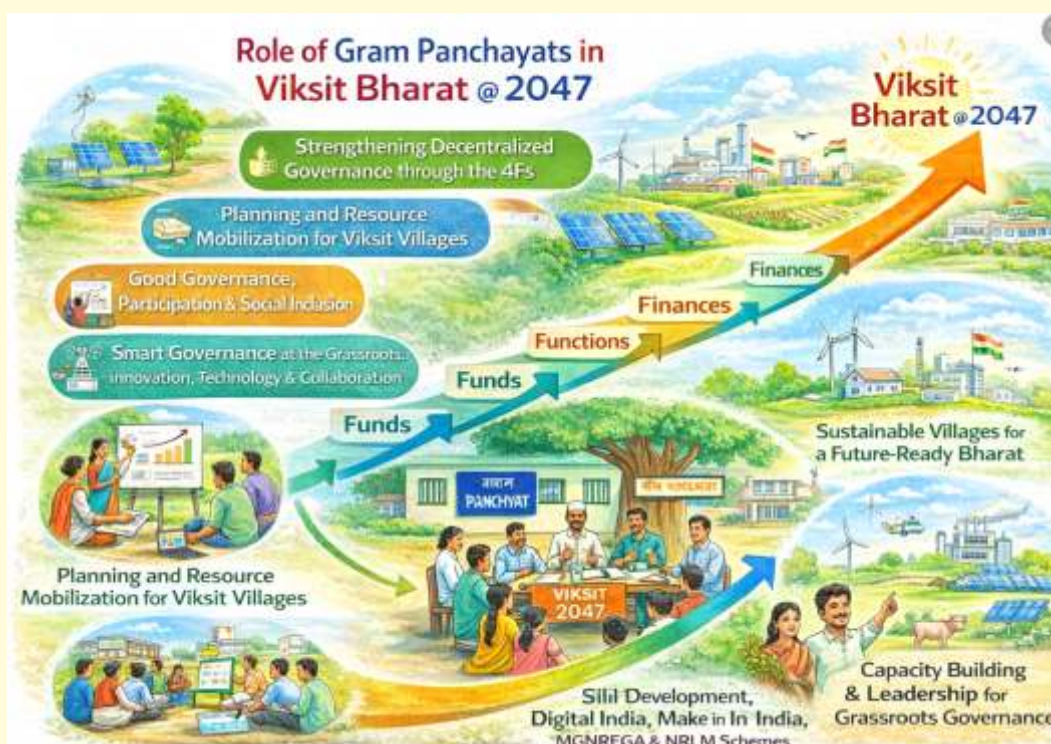
In order to review 79 years' journey of the villages in Viksit Bharat, the National Seminar was organized with the following objectives:

- To assess the evolving role and contributions of Gram Panchayats in realizing the vision of Viksit Bharat through inclusive and participatory rural development.
- To evaluate the implementation and challenges of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP) and Vision/Perspective Plan as a framework for decentralized planning and grassroots governance.
- To analyze innovative practices in governance, technology adoption, and service delivery that strengthen self-reliance and sustainability in villages.
- To explore the leadership and participation of women and marginalized groups as drivers of social change and equitable village governance.
- To suggest strategic pathways, including capacity building and policy recommendations, for empowering Panchayati Raj Institutions as the foundation of Viksit Bharat.

3. Themes and sub-themes of the National Seminar

Resource persons, experts, and delegates were invited to present papers within the broader framework of future reform agendas and the follow-up measures required at both the Centre and State levels. Accordingly, the discussions were focused on the following themes:

- Evolution and Role of Gram Panchayats in Viksit Bharat
- Strengthening Decentralized Governance through the 4Fs (Function, Fund, Function and Freedom)
- Planning and Resource Mobilization for Viksit Villages



- Good Governance, Participation, and Social Inclusion
- Smart Governance at the Grassroots: Innovation, Technology, and Collaboration
- Skill Development, Digital India, Make in India, MGNREGA and NRLM Schemes
- Sustainable Villages for a Future-Ready Bharat
- Capacity Building and Leadership for Grassroots Governance



4. Methodology

The seminar adopted a structured academic dialogue format, integrating keynote addresses, lead presentations, practitioner insights, thematic technical sessions, and interactive discussions. A total of 78 abstracts were received, of which 45 were selected by the Seminar Selection Committee. Subsequently, 34 full-length papers were submitted and presented during the seminar.

The two-day seminar featured distinguished keynote and lead speakers. A total of 45 scholars from over 15 states participated, including Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Puducherry, Goa, Kerala, and Karnataka.

Each technical session was chaired by subject experts and supported by designated discussants who critically examined the presentations and synthesized key arguments. Rapporteurs systematically documented the proceedings to ensure accurate recording of deliberations and recommendations. This methodology ensured that policy recommendations emerged from rigorous academic debate, practitioner insights, and participatory deliberations.

5. Policy Recommendations

Strengthening Gram Panchayats for Realising *Viksit Bharat @2047* Drawing upon the objectives and thematic deliberations of the National Seminar—particularly the evolving role of Gram Panchayats, decentralized governance through the 4Fs, inclusive participation, smart governance, sustainability, and capacity building—the following integrated policy recommendations are proposed. These recommendations directly align with the seminar's objectives and sub-themes and provide a structured reform roadmap for strengthening Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs).

5.1 Evolution and Role of Gram Panchayats in Viksit Bharat

Gram Panchayats must evolve from implementing agencies to empowered institutions of self-governance, functioning as democratic, developmental, and deliberative bodies at the grassroots.

- Confirm the constitutional mandate under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment by ensuring effective devolution of powers and responsibilities.
- Transform Gram Panchayats into local development governments responsible for planning, regulation, and service delivery across the 29 subjects of the Eleventh Schedule.
- Institutionalise Gram Sabhas as platforms for participatory democracy, social accountability, and inclusive development.
- Develop long-term “Viksit Gram @2047 Vision Plans” aligned with national development goals for each gram panchayat.

5.2 Strengthening Decentralized Governance through the 4Fs (Functions, Funds, Functionaries, and Freedom)

Meaningful decentralisation requires full operationalisation of the 4Fs framework.

a) Functional Devolution

- Notify comprehensive activity mapping across PRI tiers.



- Clearly assign core service delivery responsibilities such as drinking water, sanitation, minor irrigation, nutrition, and local infrastructure maintenance.

b) Fiscal Empowerment (Funds)

- Institutionalise formula-based, predictable, and transparent intergovernmental transfers.
- Ensure timely constitution and implementation of State Finance Commission recommendations.
- Expand Own Source Revenue through GIS-based property mapping, rationalised user charges, and improved tax compliance.

c) Administrative Strengthening (Functionaries)

- Establish a dedicated Panchayat Cadre with structured recruitment and career progression.
- Fill vacancies in key positions such as PDOs, accountants, and engineers through time-bound recruitment drives.

d) Functional Autonomy (Freedom)

- Provide Panchayats operational flexibility in untied funds and scheme convergence.
- Reduce excessive bureaucratic controls that undermine local autonomy.

5.3 Planning and Resource Mobilization for Viksit Villages

Evidence-based planning and resource convergence are critical for sustainable rural transformation.

- Revitalise Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDPs) as data-driven, SDG-aligned development frameworks.
- Establish Panchayat Data Cells to maintain updated socio-economic, environmental, and infrastructure databases.
- Institutionalise vertical and horizontal convergence mechanisms between Panchayats, line departments, and district authorities.
- Promote diversified revenue streams including user charges, community contributions, and local economic development initiatives.

5.4 Good Governance, Participation, and Social Inclusion

Inclusive governance strengthens democratic legitimacy and ensures equitable development outcomes.

- Mandate digital and physical disclosure of budgets, expenditures, and meeting minutes.
- Institutionalise social audits, grievance redressal systems, and Ombudsman mechanisms.
- Strengthen the effective participation of women, SC/ST, OBC, minorities, and youth through leadership development programmes.
- Integrate SHGs, FPOs, youth groups, and civil society organisations into planning and monitoring processes.
- Introduce performance-linked incentives to encourage transparency, inclusion, and innovation.

5.5 Smart Governance at the Grassroots: Innovation, Technology, and Collaboration

Technology-enabled governance enhances efficiency, accountability, and citizen engagement.

- Ensure universal broadband connectivity across all Gram Panchayats.
- Develop an integrated Digital Panchayat Finance Dashboard for real-time monitoring of fund flows and expenditures.
- Standardise geotagging, e-procurement systems, MIS platforms, and digital grievance redressal mechanisms.
- Promote AI-based analytics for predictive planning, asset management, and early warning systems.
- Encourage collaboration with academic institutions, startups, and civil society for innovation in rural governance.

5.6 Skill Development, Digital India, Make in India, MGNREGA and NRLM Schemes

Gram Panchayats must act as local anchors for rural livelihood generation and human capital development.

- Strengthen convergence between Panchayats and national missions such as Skill Development, Digital India, MGNREGA, and NRLM.
- Establish Village-Level Incubation and Entrepreneurship Centres to promote agro-processing, crafts, renewable energy enterprises, and rural startups.
- Align vocational training programmes with local economic potential and emerging market demands.
- Enhance Panchayat oversight of educational and skill institutions to improve accountability and outcomes.

5.7 Sustainable Villages for a Future-Ready Bharat

Sustainability and climate resilience must be central to rural governance.

- Integrate climate vulnerability assessments into GPDPs.
- Promote water conservation, sustainable agriculture, renewable energy adoption, and waste management systems.
- Institutionalise community-based natural resource management for forests, grazing lands, wetlands, and water bodies.
- Develop standardised environmental protocols for Panchayats nationwide.

5.8 Capacity Building and Leadership for Grassroots Governance

Strong institutions require capable leadership, professional administration, and continuous learning.

- Institutionalise structured, accredited, and continuous training programmes for elected representatives and staff.
- Provide specialised modules on financial management, procurement, digital governance, environmental planning, and grievance redressal.
- Design leadership development programmes for first-time representatives and members from marginalised communities.

- Establish performance evaluation and peer-learning platforms to promote best practices.
- Foster ethical leadership and community-oriented governance culture.

6. Conclusion:

The National Seminar confirmed that strong, accountable, and capable Panchayati Raj Institutions are foundational to inclusive growth, social justice, and sustainable development. The deliberations of the seminar have resulted in the following policy conclusions, which outline a concise reform roadmap for positioning Gram Panchayats at the centre of India's developmental transformation towards *Viksit Bharat @ 2047*.

- Endorse Democratic Decentralisation : Deepen constitutional devolution to ensure Gram Panchayats function as genuine institutions of self-government rather than scheme-implementing agencies.
- Operationalise the 4Fs Framework: Ensure full and time-bound devolution of Functions, Funds, Functionaries, and Freedom to enable meaningful local autonomy.
- Institutionalise Fiscal Empowerment: Strengthen predictable intergovernmental transfers, enhance Own Source Revenue mobilisation, and implement State Finance Commission recommendations effectively.
- Strengthen Administrative Capacity: Establish a dedicated Panchayat cadre, fill critical vacancies, and Professionalise local administration through structured recruitment and career pathways.
- Revitalise Participatory Democracy: Empower Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas as platforms for deliberative decision making, social accountability, and inclusive development.
- Promote Evidence-Based Planning: Transform Gram Panchayat Development Plans into data-driven, SDG-aligned, and outcome-oriented planning instruments.
- Advance Transparency and Accountability: Institutionalise digital disclosure systems, social audits, grievance redressal mechanisms, and performance-linked incentives.
- Leverage Digital and Smart Governance Tools: Expand broadband connectivity, digital finance dashboards, geotagging, MIS integration, and AI-enabled planning systems to modernise grassroots governance.
- Foster Inclusive and Equitable Development: Ensure effective participation and leadership of women, SC/ST communities, OBCs, minorities, and youth in planning and governance processes.



- Integrate Livelihood and Skill Development Missions: Align Panchayat governance with national initiatives such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, National Rural Livelihoods Mission, and Digital India to promote rural entrepreneurship and human capital formation.
- Embed Sustainability and Climate Resilience: Mainstream environmental planning, water conservation, renewable energy adoption, and natural resource management into Panchayat-level development strategies.
- Position Gram Panchayats as Engines of Nation-Building: Recognise empowered Gram Panchayats as foundational pillars of inclusive growth, social justice, and sustainable development, thereby aligning grassroots governance with the national aspiration of Vi

7. List of Distinguished Dignitaries and Prominent Participants

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7	Dr Shankar U	Sampoorna NGO, Bengaluru
8	Mr. Nagesh	Sampoorna NGO, Bengaluru
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10	Mr. Ramit Basu	Development Consultant, Faridabad, Haryana
11	Dr. Bishnu Prasad Mohapatra	Dr. Viswanath Karad MIT-World Peace University
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13	Mr. Balamurali CV	Senior Research Officers of CRM, Kottayam, Kerala
14	Shri Praksh Shetty	Panchayat Development Officer (PDO), Ujare, DK

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32	Dr. Santhosh Kumar PK	Coordinator, MGRDPR University, Gadag,
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