



“FORMAL AND CUSTOMARY PANCHAYATS IN KARNATAKA-A STUDY OF INTERACTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WELFARE OF THE MARGINALIZED GROUPS”

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This research explore the role played by the customary panchayats in the rural governance and in enhancing welfare/development besides studying the interaction between them and the formal panchayats, especially in the backward districts of Karnataka, where people are still languishing in ignorance and poverty. Objectives of the study are To explore the possibility of co-existence of formal and informal - traditional/customary panchayats in rural Karnataka; To examine the composition of customary panchayats, if any, and the representation of marginalized groups therein; To probe into the activities carried on by the customary panchayats and to examine their impact on the marginalized groups; To study the dynamics of interaction between the customary and formal panchayats and to examine its implications on the well-being of the marginalized groups; To discern the scope for social work intervention, if any.

In the present study, the researcher has not only found the existence of these customary panchayats alongside the formal panchayats, but also that these panchayats overtly or covertly have been influencing the local self-governance. However, since there is no stipulated and/or well laid down procedure to form these customary panchayats, it is found that many criteria are considered by the residents of the villages for determining the membership. Unlike the formal panchayats which are constituted on the basis of population, the jurisdiction of the customary panchayats is limited to a particular village and the people of that village. As regards the

interaction between the formal and informal panchayats, more than 50 per cent of the respondents mentioned about it. The informal leaders still influence the major decisions which eventually influence not only the governance of the village but also the lives of people. Besides dispute resolution, the customary panchayats also perform an important role in the selection of candidates for the gram panchayat elections and the development activities of the villages. This clearly shows that the Customary Panchayat perform a determinant role in selecting candidates to the Gram Panchayat - the local governing body, which deals with development and other works of the village. In all the four villages where the present study was carried out, the Customary Panchayats had taken up development activities to solve some of the problems in the villages on their own. These activities were undertaken by the Customary Panchayats to help the villagers.