



## **Decentralized Governance in Karnataka: A Study of Digital Institutional Reform through the Panchatantra 2.0 Framework.**

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### **Abstract:**

Panchayati Raj began to strengthen local self-government in India. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act granted panchayats constitutional status and defined their powers. Karnataka later introduced digital governance to improve panchayat administration. The state launched the Panchatantra 1.0 application to manage accounts and services, but it faced limits in integration and scale. This led to the need for Panchatantra 2.0 as an improved digital platform. This study aims at digital institutional reform via Panchatantra 2.0. and also examines its benefits, key challenges, and practical solutions to improve service delivery, transparency, efficiency, and accountability in decentralized rural systems.

**Keywords:** decentralization, digital governance, institutional reform, Panchatantra 2.0, and Panchayat Raj.

### **Introduction:**

Panchayati Raj in India developed from ancient Vedic village councils into a constitutionally recognized system of local governance. This long journey shows India's deep commitment to grassroots democracy. Mahatma Gandhi strengthened this idea through his vision of Gram Swaraj. He believed that every village should govern itself and take decisions on political, economic, and social matters.

After independence, the Balwantrai Mehta Committee gave clear direction to this process. It recommended a three-tier system: Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti, and Zila Parishad. India adopted this structure, and it continues to guide rural governance today.

The system gained national importance in 1959 when Jawaharlal Nehru inaugurated Panchayati Raj in Rajasthan. This event marked a major shift toward structured, participatory, and decentralized governance across the country.

### **Objectives of the study:**

This study discusses the Panchatantra 2.0 platform and its role in decentralized governance in Karnataka. It explains how digital reforms support transparency and



administrative efficiency. The study also looks at improvements in service delivery at the Panchayat level.

The study focuses on the following objectives:

1. Study the transition from Panchatantra 1.0 to Panchatantra 2.0 in Karnataka.
2. Understand the major modules and functions of the Panchatantra 2.0 platform.
3. Assess the role of the platform in improving transparency and financial management.
4. Identify the challenges faced by Panchayats in using the system.
5. Suggest measures to strengthen digital governance in rural administration.

### **The 73rd Constitutional Amendment:**

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act gave constitutional status to Panchayati Raj institutions in India. This law created a structured system of decentralized governance in rural areas. It introduced Part IX into the Constitution of India, which includes Articles 243 to 243-O. These constitutional provisions came into force on April 24, 1993. This marked an important step toward strengthening local self-government in rural India.

India follows the three-tier Panchayati Raj system to strengthen decentralized governance. At the village level, the Gram Panchayat works as the basic unit of local administration; it directly deals with the needs and concerns of rural people. The second tier is the Panchayati Samiti, which works at the block level and coordinates development activities among Gram Panchayats. At the district level, the Zilla Parishad serves as the top body; it plans and supervises development programs in the district.

### **From Panchatantra 1.0 to Panchatantra 2.0:**

Karnataka has 5,955 Gram Panchayats, and the state has taken many steps to improve the functioning of these local institutions. The Government of Karnataka and the Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department have introduced several reforms to strengthen rural administration. In recent years, the government has also focused on digital governance to improve transparency and efficiency in public administration.

Karnataka is widely known for its early initiatives in e-administration. The state launched several digital platforms such as Bhoomi for land records, Khajane for financial management, and Sakala for time-bound delivery of government services. These initiatives helped improve transparency, reduce delays, and strengthen public service delivery (Government of Karnataka, 2023). Building on these experiences, the state also began introducing digital systems in rural governance.

Before the launch of Panchatantra 2.0, the Government of Karnataka introduced Panchatantra 1.0 to bring digital systems into Gram Panchayat administration. The Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department developed this platform mainly to manage Panchayat finances. Officials used the system to record income, track expenditures, and maintain



financial accounts. The platform reduced manual paperwork and helped Panchayats maintain better financial records.

However, Panchatantra 1.0 focused mainly on financial management. It did not include other important functions such as planning, monitoring development activities, or delivering citizen services through a single system. To address these limitations and strengthen digital governance at the local level, the Government of Karnataka later introduced Panchatantra 2.0. This platform integrates several government functions and services into one system. It helps officials manage records, monitor development work, and improve coordination among Panchayati Raj Institutions, which supports better governance and service delivery in rural areas (Government of Karnataka, 2023).

### **Research Methodology:**

This study adopts a descriptive and analytical research approach to examine the Panchatantra 2.0 digital governance platform in Karnataka. The study primarily relies on secondary data collected from government reports, official Panchatantra portal documents, academic publications, and policy reports related to Panchayati Raj institutions and e-governance initiatives. Information has also been gathered from official websites of the Government of Karnataka and Rural Development and Panchayat Raj Department. The collected data has been analyzed to understand the objectives, functioning, benefits, and challenges of the Panchatantra 2.0 system in improving decentralized governance.

### **Vision of Panchatantra 2.0:**

Panchatantra 2.0 seeks to improve the functioning of Gram Panchayats and make village administration stronger. The platform focuses on providing service quickly and properly and also has open and clear administration and manages Gram Panchayat work better.

#### **1. Expanding Access to Public Services**

The system helps more people get access to government services in rural areas. It makes the process easier and helps citizens get services from Bapuji Seva Kendras and the online system.

#### **2. Empowering Local Self-Governance**

The platform helps Panchayati Raj institutions follow government rules properly. Digital tools support officials in doing their work better and faster.

#### **3. Simplifying Administrative Processes**

Panchatantra 2.0 organizes several administrative processes and makes the procedure the same everywhere. This helps improve planning and encourages people in the village to take part in village development.



#### 4. Monitoring Progress and Outcomes

The platform collects information and studies how Panchayat Raj institutions work. This information helps authorities monitor development activities and make informed decisions.

#### 5. Improving Financial Management

“Digital systems make tax collection and service payments more transparent. They also help Gram Panchayats manage finances better and use funds properly for village development.”

### **Phases of Panchatantra 2.0:**

#### **Phase 1 – Gram Panchayats Core Functions**

Panchatantra 2.0 focuses on the daily work of Gram Panchayats. The system uses digital tools to support the regular functions of village administration. Citizens benefit when they apply for services or seek information. Panchayat staff use the platform to manage their daily tasks more easily. Administrators also use the system to plan and monitor development programmes. In this way, digital technology becomes a practical part of everyday governance at the village level.

#### **Phase 2 – Coverage Expansion**

In this phase, the system adds better digital tools and improved reporting features. These tools help officials track how funds are used and keep financial activities more transparent. The platform also includes more government schemes. This makes it easier for Panchayats to manage their work through one system. The new digital features help local officials make better decisions and deliver services more effectively to rural communities.

#### **Phase 3 – PRI Expansion**

Phase III expands the platform beyond Gram Panchayats. In this stage, the system is introduced in Zilla Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats, and other implementing agencies. As a result, higher-level offices also start using the same digital platform. More government schemes are added to the system, which helps different levels of the Panchayati Raj system work together more easily. The platform also helps officials implement schemes and monitor development work at each level.

This phase also focuses on better coordination among government departments. The system connects different departmental platforms and allows them to share information easily. With this connection, departments can exchange data, take joint decisions, and plan development activities more effectively.

#### **Phase IV Holistic Expansion**



Phase IV expands the system in a more integrated way. In this phase, Panchatantra 2.0 connects with major departments involved in rural development. The platform brings planning, monitoring, and service delivery into a single system. This allows different departments to work on the same digital platform. It also supports better planning and helps officials take part in decision-making together.

## **Major Modules of Panchatantra 2.0:**

### **1. Financial Management Module**

The finance and accounting module helps Gram Panchayats manage their financial activities in an organized way. It records income and expenses through digital voucher entries and generates financial records such as cash books and accounting registers. The system follows the double-entry accounting method to ensure transparency and accuracy in financial transactions.

### **2. Revenue Collection Module**

The Revenue Collection module helps Gram Panchayats manage local revenue sources such as taxes, service fees, and property rents. The system supports online and offline payment methods and maintains proper records of revenue collections.

### **3. Citizen Service Module**

This module enables Gram Panchayats to provide services to citizens in a systematic and digital manner. Citizens can submit service requests through Bapuji Seva Kendras. The system tracks applications and generates reports to monitor service delivery.

### **4. Planning Module**

The planning module supports the preparation of development plans such as perspective plans, annual plans, and Gram Panchayat development plans. It helps officials organize development activities across different sectors and improve decision-making.

### **5. Human Resource Management System (HRMS)**

The HRMS module helps manage staff information and employee records. It supports salary approvals, attendance monitoring, and generation of monthly salary reports.

### **6. Panchamitra – Public Information Portal**

Panchamitra is a public information portal that allows citizens to access details about Gram Panchayat activities. It provides information about elected representatives, meeting schedules, and financial activities.

### **7. Meeting Management Module**



This module helps organize official meetings such as Gram Sabha meetings and Panchayat meetings. It maintains digital records of meeting discussions and decisions.

## 8. Learning and Knowledge Module

This module supports training programs for Panchayat officials and staff. It provides learning materials, training schedules, and feedback systems to improve the skills and knowledge of stakeholders.

### **Impact and Benefits:**

Panchatantra 2.0 improves administrative efficiency and transparency in Panchayat governance. The platform helps officials access real-time information through dashboards and analytical tools. These features support monitoring, reporting, and better decision-making.

The system also supports digital documentation and transparent financial management. It helps departments conduct social audits and maintain accountability in governance. By integrating different administrative functions, the platform improves coordination among officials and enhances service delivery for rural citizens.

### **Challenges of Panchatantra 2.0:**

#### 1. Limited Digital Infrastructure

Many rural areas face issues such as weak internet connectivity and unreliable electricity. These challenges affect the regular use of digital platforms in Gram Panchayats.

#### 2. Lack of Technical Skills

Some Panchayat staff members require additional training to effectively use digital systems and manage online administrative processes.

#### 3. Technical and Software Issues

Digital platforms sometimes experience technical problems such as server errors or system glitches that may delay administrative processes.

#### 4. Low Public Awareness

Many rural citizens are not fully aware of online government services. As a result, they continue to rely on traditional methods of visiting Panchayat offices.

#### 5. Data Management Issues

Converting older manual records into digital formats can create data inconsistencies. Continuous verification and updating of records are necessary to maintain accurate information.



## **Suggestions and Recommendations:**

### **1. Strengthening Digital Infrastructure**

Improving internet connectivity and digital infrastructure in rural areas will help Panchayats use digital platforms effectively.

### **2.Capacity Building and Training**

Regular training programs should be conducted for Panchayat staff and elected representatives to improve their digital skills.

### **3.Increasing Public Awareness**

Government agencies should conduct awareness programs and digital literacy campaigns to help citizens understand online services.

### **4.Improving Data Management Systems**

Proper systems should be developed to verify and update digital records regularly.

### **5.Enhancing Departmental Integration**

Panchatantra 2.0 should integrate more effectively with other government databases and departmental systems to improve service delivery.

## **Conclusion:**

Panchatantra 2.0 represents a significant step toward digital governance in rural administration. The platform integrates key administrative functions of Gram Panchayats and improves transparency, efficiency, and accountability. By supporting digital service delivery and data-based decision-making, the system strengthens the functioning of Panchayati Raj institutions.

However, challenges such as digital infrastructure gaps, limited technical skills, and low public awareness must be addressed to ensure its effective implementation. With proper training, improved infrastructure, and increased public participation, Panchatantra 2.0 can play a vital role in promoting sustainable rural development and strengthening local governance in Karnataka.

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