Chapter II

Review of literature
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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature is an essential ingredient of research work. It enables the researcher to identify the work done in the field and gives insight to the researcher to gain an in-depth knowledge of the subject. It clarifies the researcher’s doubts and confusion. It enables to upgrade the work which has been already done and provides insight for future research work. Keeping in view the above, attempts has been made to review the available related literature so as to understand the concepts, issues, problems and develop insight for the present study. In this chapter the researcher has classified the topics under different headings related to the objectives of the study.

2.1 Concept of Panchayat Raj

Many scholars have attempted to define and conceptualise the term Panchayat Raj. Hooja (1978) attempted to review the genesis of the twin concepts of Panchayat Raj and Democratic Decentralization in context of their historical perspective and in light of the development on the eve of independence and since. He suggests that there is a need for a harmonious working relation between the Panchayat Institution and the district administration. The issue, therefore, needs to be approached from a different angle, by which the agencies of the district administration and the Panchayat Raj bodies have to work as mutually complimentary and supporting units of one and the same democratic administrations at the state level and not as rivals of contenders for each other’s powers.

Mathur and Narain (1969) concentrated basically on two issues: (i) Panchayat Raj and Democracy, and (ii) the politico-administrative aspects of Panchayat Raj. They were of the view that there is a conflict between Panchayat Raj and parliamentary democracy. They concluded that the problem of official and non-official relationship is not as baffling as it is made out to be. Lastly, they suggested that training and education programmes for the elected representatives are essential for their success.
Inamdar (1970) attempted to study four village Panchayats in Maharashtra state. He has dealt with the working of this basic unit of government and administration in all its varied aspects, election, personnel (elected and appointed), functions, finances, Grama Sabha and most important, its leadership. The four case studies examined how far the purpose underlying the Village Panchayat Act of 1958 of Maharashtra state is realized in practice. The study points out the gap between ‘the ideal’ and ‘the real’ and thereby contributes to a deeper understanding of the village Panchayats that have now achieved a more significant role in laying the foundation of a socially awakened and economically secure democracy. He emphasizes that the successful functioning of the village Panchayats depend upon the availability of resourceful, imaginative, and active Panchayat leadership.

As against this view the Ashok Mehta Committee (1977) assumed that the success of the entire scheme would depend on the continued interest, goodwill, and cooperation of all political parties. The assumption regarding the value of political commitment or cooperation for the success of Panchayat Raj Institutions is valid. There is a little doubt that ultimately all administration, including development and welfare are part of the political process of building a society and polity and taking it into a certain direction.

Bhargava (1979) has discussed issues and problems with regard to the Panchayat Raj movement in the country in general, and Karnataka in particular. He mentioned that efforts have been made to discuss the major recommendations of the Ashok Mehta Committee with a view to highlight issues and problems of great significance in reforming the Panchayat Raj. Finally he suggests that there is a need for rural development to strengthen the rural infrastructures for development, faith in Panchayat Raj, and timely elections to these bodies.

Singh (1986) discusses the three-tier structure of Panchayat Raj and their functioning in his article titled ‘Revitalization of Panchayats.’ He says that, there should be a statutory provision for recall of Panchayat members who by their conduct have forfeited the trust of the electorates. These institutions should be provided with adequate resources. There is also a need to constitute a state level Panchayat Raj Finance Commission, once in five years to review its recommendations for the purpose of fair distribution of resources of the Panchayats. Lastly, he says that the strength and effectiveness of village Panchayats will depend upon an intelligent, enthusiastic, and sustained interest and participation of the village community.
Hirway (1989) in her article, ‘Panchayat Raj at Cross Roads,’ studies the concept of Panchayat Raj. She examines the inadequacies of these concepts and the potential of Panchayat Raj in our political system. She has analyzed the experiences of different states and drawn conclusions of these experiences. Then she has critically examined the 64th Amendment Bill and made some inferences about the implication of strengthening the Panchayat Raj in the country. She concludes that the Panchayat Raj structures set up in our country are not doing very well and there is a need to revitalize them. Changing the existing structure, or at least strengthening the position of the poor against exploitation is an important requirement for the success of the Panchayat Raj. She says that the 64th Amendment Bill was at best a partial and weak attempt to save the Panchayat Raj. It was more likely to be misused by the Centre than help the process of decentralization.

George (1994) stated that even after independence, despite the commitment by nationalist leaders for Grama Swaraj, the constituent assembly was not categorical about it. Thus the Panchayats found a place only in the Directive Principles of State Policy, leaving it to the goodwill of individual states to give the system meaning and content. Indeed, the Panchayat Raj has had an evolution starting from the community development programme and national extension service and passing through innumerable committees and commissions, culminating in the 73rd Constitution Amendment. Political non-commitment and lack of constitutional safeguards paved the way towards centralization that had characterized Indian polity in its early period. The centralization of political authority reached its peak during the 1980s. Unprecedented destabilization in the states, all-round loss of faith in the democratic institution, deteriorating living conditions of rural people, growing parochialism, and the rise of militancy were some of the turbulent manifestations.

The different writers spelt their opinion in the right direction. Ultimately it has taken a shape to adopt Panchayat Raj system. The Panchyathi Raj system has given the right meaning for the democracy and the Constitution of India. Because of the Panchayat Raj system our rural people are able to administer the rule by themselves. This is the foundation for the whole democratic system. The review of the concept has given a very clear understanding about the Panchyati Raj system in India.
2.2 History of Panchayat Raj Institution

The history of Panchayat Raj Institutions is rooted in ancient Indian history. Malviya (1956) explains the historical and ideological background of the Grama Panchayats in India from time immemorial, and focuses on how the village Panchayats in this ancient country developed into a sound system of democracy in accordance with our indigenous traditions and culture. The author concludes with a suggestion that the village Panchayats in India could really succeed in bringing about decentralization of economic and political power under conditions of social and economic equality.

The Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report (1957) examined the working of the development projects and national extension service with a view “to economy and efficiency.” It was found that few of the local bodies at a level higher than the village panchayats did not show any interest in this work and even the panchayats did not come to the fields to any appreciable extent. Finally, the movement succeeded in stabilizing local initiatives and in creating institutions to ensure continuity in the process of improving the conditions in rural areas. The committee report suggested a three-tier system of rural local government, the tiers linked by a system of elections. These three tiers were the Gram Panchyath at village level, Panchayat Samithi at block level, and Zilla Parishad at district level.

Singh (1987) presents a historical view of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in India, together with a discussion on the theoretical, organizational, and functional dimensions of the Panchayat Raj. He concludes that Bihar was one of the first states in India to enact legislation on Panchayat Raj (1947), yet regular elections could not be held and devolution of power was not possible. The state government played with the idea of the devolution of power as it pleased the politics administrative bureaucracy. The Panchayat Raj could not succeed even in the eight districts of Bihar where it had been launched, and the devolution of power to the grassroots level remained a misnomer. This study concludes that the gap between theory and practice remained. However, there are some striking points of the Panchayat Raj system in Bihar. The author refers to the Panchayats as a training ground at the grass roots level which provides an opportunity for the transformation of local leadership into district and state level leadership. The Panchayat remained an institution led by local bureaucracy, and hence the self-dependence and self-reliance among the rural masses.
could not develop. And without the necessary financial backing the Panchayat remained hollow in its functions. The attitude of the state government towards the Panchayat Raj Institutions remained generally indifferent. He also quoted that, Jayaparakash Narayan had cherished the idea of strengthening the grass roots democracy for quite a long time practically since the Sarvodaya Movement in 1954. He always stressed the requirements of decentralization. He emphasized repeatedly that Panchayat Raj should be strengthened. He was of the view that: A proper balance must be struck between a state government on the one hand and organs of local self-government, or Panchayat Raj Institutions on the other. For this purpose, it may be necessary to provide for these Panchayat Raj Institutions in the Constitution itself and clearly shortlist their powers, so that they may exercise legitimate power and remain answerable to their constituents. Mahatma Gandhi had envisaged self-sustained and self-sufficient village republics capable of managing their affairs. The Panchayat Raj as postulated by Mahatma Gandhi, was given a place in Article 40 of the Indian Constitution under the heading Directive Principles of State Policy. This was really an integral part of the concept of Pooran Swaraj and Gram Swaraj as being two integrally inter-related concepts. His concept of (Pooran Swaraj) means several levels of autonomous development of local communities. It also meant that there has to be growth and development of the individual of the local community in every walk of life. Then Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru proclaimed at Nagore, a place in Rajasthan that Panchayat Raj institutions were going to be the bedrock for grassroots democracy. He thought that unless this kind of grassroots democracy was not developed there would be a lack of participation in the democratic process which would also be reflected in an equal or greater lack of participation in the development process. He, therefore, thought of Panchayat Raj Institutions as integral both to democratic self government and to the democratic development at the grassroots level and thus it was conceived.

2.3 Structure and Function of Panchayat Raj Institutions

The structure of Panchayat Raj Institutions has been varying from time to time. Experiments were done to see which one was more effective so as to give scope for positive people participation in development. In his article, Khanna (1956) presents us with the historical perspective of the structure, machinery and working of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India. He says that the Panchayat Raj has been suffering from a lack of confidence and low self esteem. The Panchayat Raj system also faces other problems like inadequate financial resources, in equalitarian attitude of officials,
mass illiteracy, ignorance, class consciousness, party strife, limited financial and administrative autonomy, and lack of faith in grass roots democracy. But despite these deficiencies, the institutions of Panchayat Raj have added a new dimension to rural development and have brought socio-economic democracy to the door-steps of the common man in Indian villages. The author suggests that properly articulated structure of government and effective administrative machinery geared up to operate without friction is the need of the hour.

Khanna (1966) studied the structure, functions, finances, and the working of Panchayat Raj in Punjab and Haryana. He has also made suggestions for improvement in the working of Panchayat Raj through democratic measures.

Mathur, Narain, and Sinha (1966) examined the emerging institutional leadership, behaviour pattern and the interests of the members, its functioning in the specific context of ‘planning from below’ and implementation of development programmes and the baffling problems of ‘non-official’ relationship, the financial and administrative challenges facing it and finally, its overall impact in one district of Rajasthan. They concluded that the Panchayat Raj has so far not fulfilled the expectations at grass roots level. This is borne out by the emerging neo-rich leadership; villagers admire the Panchayat Raj as a concept but are disappointed and disgusted with the operational aspect of the Panchayat Raj institutions. The authors suggested that administrative innovations should go a long way to improve the tone and working of Panchayat Raj institutions.

Narian, Kumar, and Mathur (1970) have covered the Panchayat Raj institutions in Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra; various functional spheres like economic, social, political and administrative, and ways of strengthening their roots in the soil of rural India have also been discussed. The structure and operation of the network of control and supervision over Panchayat Raj system in these states shows that each Panchyati Raj institution is subject to a variety of institutional, administrative, technical, and financial controls which restricts its area of operational autonomy and the extent of internal self-regulation. It is suggested that unless the state governments are convinced that they also bear partial responsibility for the failure of Panchayat Raj institutions, they cannot be in a position to have a correct approach and attitude towards the Panchayat Raj institutions.
Maheshwari (1971) describes the structure, personnel, finance and functioning of rural as well as urban local government. He concludes that inadequate financial resources, low pay scales, incompetent personnels, excessive interference by the local politicians in the day to day administration, wide spread corruption, nepotism and favouritism in the local civil service are cited as the major causes of ineffectiveness of local governments’ development. He suggests that there should be a deliberate policy to encourage experimentation and allow variation to suit the local government so that they may develop their roots.

The Ashok Mehta Committee (1978) was set up to ‘enquire’ into the working of the Panchayat Raj Institutions and to suggest measures for strengthening them so as to enable decentralized planning and development to be effective. The committee suggested that the formulation of structure and functions, and the utilization of financial, administrative, and human resources in Panchayat Raj Institution should be determined on the emerging functional necessity of management of Rural Development. Further, it recommended a ‘two-tier model’ of Panchayat Raj instead of the three tier model suggested by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee. These two tiers were the Zilla Parishad at District level and the Mandal Panchayat at village level.

Rao and Hazarika (1978) conclude in their article that local bodies are not entirely democratic. There is no genuine decentralization of powers and functions in them. Therefore, the term ‘democratic decentralization’ is not real.

2.4 Panchayat Raj Election and Leaders

Democratic decentralisation was realised in India by adopting the Panchayat Raj Institutions in which election was the key to democracy whereby a representative was elected by eligible voters. Desai (1969) revealed that the Panchayat Raj has provided a new framework for a political caste struggle between rival landlords, jealous of each other’s prestige, and determined to maintain their strength at the cost of the rival group. On the positive side of the Panchayat Raj system, he maintained that villagers were becoming election conscious because it represented their choice.
Reddy and Sheshadri (1972) made an attempt to study the Panchayat elections of 1970 in Andhra Pradesh. The authors point out that in an effort to bring about a compromise between contesting parties, the elections could not be avoided as politics has stepped down to the Panchayat level. There is a sharp line that divides the elite from the masses and the voters have a vivid perception of it. While leaders believe that the voters’ choice is determined by caste and wealth, the voters admit to have been prompted by requirements of general welfare and ideological considerations. The emergence of younger leader indicates the decline of historical leadership. Factional conflicts within the Congress impacted its electoral fate, but the existence of factionalism in CPI (M) helped the Jan Sangha to consolidate its position. It is generally recognized that Panchayat Raj holds bright prospects of general development in the region.

Sharma (1979) hints at links between rural leadership and the needs of villagers in negotiations with urban administrative centers and political powers at higher level in the western part of Uttar Pradesh. When leadership is viewed over a number of Panchayat elections, continuity, discontinuity, re-emergence of leaders, caste remains the same, only individuals change. He says that the leaders belonging to these castes are major land owners and have maintained their supremacy. Even the opposition comes largely from within the dominant caste and a limited number of Khandans act as operators of political powers whether in authority or in opposition.

Biju (1995) in his article on ‘Panchayat Elections in Kerala’ highlighted that electoral politics in Kerala has always been of special interest for political scientists all over the world. An impractical and scientific analysis of the poll shows that, one of the most important and striking determinants of the voting behaviour of the rural electorates in Kerala is the influence of political ideology. The high level political consciousness, high level literacy, highly developed communication network, the existence of a number of national and local parties and trade unions are some of the factors responsible for this politicization. Some of the voters, who are committed to a particular ideology, usually vote for a candidate who is more important for the voters than for his charisma; political issues too influence the rural voters. Rural voting behaviour is also influenced by the performance of the party in power. Casteism is another major factor which influences the voting behaviour of the rural electorates in
the state, particularly after the emergence of the Muslim league, Kerala Congress, Bharathiya Janatha Party (BJP), Indian National League (INL), and lastly the People’s Democratic Party. It is very clear now-a-days that, both caste and politics are hand and glove in Kerala politics. It ultimately shows that people are quite intelligent in casting their vote who give a lot of thought before voting. It is also observed that education plays a major role in the voting decision.

Even though, Grama Panchayat elections are conducted without party symbols most of the candidates have the support of the national, regional or local party. A few independent candidates also could be seen contesting the election. Today people spend lots of money for the election. And they submit a false statement of account showing the election expenditure. This is common everywhere. Even at the Grama Panchayat level this is a common occurrence. But nobody has painted a negative picture of election and the election campaign. But states like Karnataka, have given much importance to the Grama panchyati election and election commission will conduct the same.

2.5 Panchayat Raj and Community Development

This promotes the active participation of the people and attains community development. Maddick (1970) suggested that there may be cooperatives, voluntary associations, private firms, individuals, and government agencies dealing with different aspects of rural development, all of whom have to contribute to the process of the plan fulfilment. In respect of the rural level government in India the Panchayat Raj is playing a great role in certain areas, particularly in promoting social change, economic development, and intelligent administration of their respective government. But all these can be adversely affected if the Panchayat Raj is ineffective or becomes a vehicle of partiality, nepotism, and corruption. In India, the rural government should be democratic and effective. This is possible only if the Panchayat Raj is organized and guided to serve its long term objectives.

Prasad (1971) studied the twin processes of democratization and development in a village Awa of Bihar. He concluded that while the village Panchayats had stimulated the process of political democratization, it had not accelerated the pace of economic development in the village.
Bhatt (1974) says that a new trend can now be observed in the village after the introduction of the Panchayat Raj. The Panchayats which really constitute the base of the Panchayat Raj have become more politically active. The Panchayats have not been able to contribute to the productive sector like agriculture and those involved in the non-productive activities incur high costs on behalf of the government because of political involvement. The peaceful and united villages have been divided into factions and groups. Despite these shortcomings, the workings of the rural local bodies have justified their establishment.

Rai and Singh (1975) studied the Panchayat Raj system right from the community development programme to the Balvantrai Mehta committee report and its implementation. They concluded that the present system of election is not conducive to the growth of healthy popular participation at the local level. To strengthen the participation they suggested that the head of the local educational institution and office bearers of different political parties should be associated with the Panchayat Raj bodies. They can supply more correctly, different shades of social opinion about the pertinent problems and needs of the locality. They concluded that the whole drama seems to be an affair between the pluralistic, descriptive and selfish non-official, indifferent, negligent and non-committed administration, and disintegrated state government’s authority. The ignorant, poor, backward, and helpless constitute the audience. In such a situation participatory democracy in the real sense of the term cannot flourish. The co-operation and participation of every section of the community is needed to make it a success. The Panchayat Raj body cannot be replaced in the foreseeable future by any other structure to secure this cooperation and participation.

Laxminaryana (1976) focuses on the conditions and problems of rural people, their institutions and way of living under the impact of planned social change after the initiation of the community development programme in the Mandya district of Mysore state (present Karnataka). These villages have been integrated with the wider economic and political system and have many linkages with the outside world. These linkages have been provided through communication and other institutional networks. The improved means of communication, community development programmes, and Panchayat Raj have played a significant role in modernizing the villages. He concludes that the political setup has politicized the traditional society, but this has not affected the social structure of the village.
Abida (1976) examines the growth of the community development programmes in their broad perspective and has highlighted their relevance to rural economy and democratic institutions of Panchayat Raj. She emphasizes on proper training of rural services and has stressed the need for providing job oriented education and training in social skills to the personnel, working in the community development programmes and Panchayat Raj Institutions. Again, there is a need for an equitable distribution of the fruits of growth and modernization. The grassroots institutions need a revision on the basic objectives of the development programmes, structural reforms of organizational pattern, revised administrative techniques, and adequate financial resources matching their responsibilities. Finally, suggestions are given to work hard for growth with social justice and faith in people and to improve the administrative machinery of these institutions and strengthen them organizationally and financially in the rural areas.

Rao (1980) states that the success of rural development through democratic decentralization largely depends on two basic factors, viz., (a) the emergence and growth of the egalitarian power structure in the democratic institution at the grassroot level, and (b) economically viable size of these institutions. Therefore the author deals with the investigation of these two issues, at the level of village Panchayats in the Tumkur district of Karnataka. The author came to the conclusion that larger panchayats having a population base of 4,000 would be economically viable to implement rural development programmes. In this context he suggests that such a unit of 4,000 persons should form the basis for panchayats, a cooperative, other institutions dealing with rural development, hence a cluster approach has been suggested. Secondly, there is a need to give representation to villages rather than to population within the unit so that each village having a population of at least 200 persons will have its representative in the panchayats to take care of its interest. The urgent need for the effective implementation of land reform and improving the spread of education among the weaker sections of society has been advocated by many authors. The dominance of the upper economic classes in Panchayats and in other local level institutions is a well established fact, as already bought out by other research studies. Thus further efforts should be made to show how the local institutions can become more representative and to ensure that the benefits of development reach the weaker sections in an increasing measure.
Jain et al. (1985) examined the structure and suitability of the institutional arrangement made for the delivery of rural development programmes, especially to the poor. The study therefore, looks at selected programmes to observe their performance in relation to their stated objectives. The authors concluded that poverty and inequality are on the increase. The basic reason for the failure of the rural development and poverty alleviation programme is the exclusion of the people from participating in the development process and abandonment of the institution of democratic decentralization and related electoral processes. Under the circumstances, the only solution is democratic decentralization.

Patil and Kittur (1990) in their article titled ‘Grass roots democracy; Analysis of Grama Sabhas’ presented a case study of the Grama Sabha in Karnataka state which revealed that inspite of government’s and Zilla Parishad’s continuous efforts by way of circulars, orders, and telegrams to activate the Grama Sabha, most of the taluks and Grama Sabha are not functioning as per the statutory requirement. The motivation and actions of the Zilla Parishad’s have not yielded satisfactory results in reactivating the Grama Sabha meetings.

Palekar (2009) in his article on ‘The Working of Panchayat Raj : An Analysis’ concluded that, ‘there is no doubt that the developmental programmes have not been channeled through them fully, but it must be understood that it has many achievements to its credits in introducing the process of democratic seed drilling in the Indian soil, in bridging the gulf (gap) between the bureaucratic elite and the people in generating a new leadership, not relatively young, in age but pro-social change in outlook. As an end, it is an inevitable extension of democracy; as a means, it would continue to be responsible for discharging obligations entrusted to it by the Central and State governments in the areas not yet transferred to its exclusive jurisdiction.’

2.6 People Participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions

People participation in Panchayat Raj Institutions is an essential requirement for bringing desirable changes in rural India. Sheshadri (1976) analyses the interdependence between the local and higher levels of administration in Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat and emphasizes on the general citizenry participators and
moulders of the political policies and their interconnection with local level leaders. He highlights the importance of bringing change in local level leadership in the political party and also in the central party discipline and commitment to the welfare of the weaker section. The author also highlights the improvement of the bureaucracy in the development of the weaker section and emphasizes that political will and administrative vigour are important.

Dubey and Murdia (1976) studied the influence of particular considerations like caste, kinship, pattern of client relationship, party and political affiliation on decision making by Panchayat Raj leaders in the district of Mana and Shripur in Maharashtra. The authors have come to the conclusion that particularistic, person-oriented, consideration override, problem oriented one, that partition, class caste, kinship and personality factors are determining ones, that procedures, rational, criteria and official advice are often neglected. They concluded that, they have to be more sensitive to the needs, wishes, preferences, and demands of their supporters.

Manikyamba (1989) in her study of Andhra Pradesh found that the socio-economic backgrounds in elected women participation in general and political background in particular, are important determinants in shaping the nature and level of participation of members in political institutions. The study reveals that education and participation are interrelated. Apart from that, economic status gives a sense of confidence and encouragement to participate. The participation of the poor women members is mostly found to be insignificant.

Mishra (1989) revealed that various countries have different approaches to achieve the target of rural development in the Indian context. Further, he examined the three-tier system and stressed the need for people’s participation in policy formulation and its implementation.

2.7 Elected Women Participation

The increasing trend of women joining politics at all levels is to be noted. However, to what extent elected women representatives participate in Panchayat Raj Institutions needs to be examined. Arun (1997) in a case study of Madhya Pradesh found that in most cases women members were housewives, first time entrants into politics and a majority of them were either illiterates or educated up to primary level.
The Indian Institute of Social Science (2000) in a study of the Panchayat Raj in Haryana has reviewed the progress of some hundred elected women in four districts; majority of the elected women panchas including younger women were illiterate when elected to office. After two years in office, they demanded literacy skills and generally felt the need of education for their daughters too.

Panda (1996) in her study of a village Panchayat in Orissa found that women entered into politics due to the mandatory provision of reservation. Most of the women were from non-political background and had entered politics due to coercion by their family members or pressure from the village community. The important aspect of her study is that the women who reluctantly entered into politics showed great maturity in outlook, enthusiasm, increasing political consciousness, and increasing perception of their role and responsibility.

In another study, Panda (1999) brought out an interesting point that there prevailed a strong caste feeling and generally women belonging to the upper caste did not come forward to represent the Panchayat. This provided an opportunity to the women labourers and lower castes to emerge as a potential force in village politics.

Gowda et al. (1996), in their study of the elected women Panchayat leaders in Karnataka, point out that the women members of developed taluks were found to play a better developmental role than their counterparts in the backward taluks. The study reveals that among socio-economic attributes such as age, education, caste, annual household income, and land ownership by women leaders, only education and annual household income had a highly significant and positive relation with their developmental role performance. The findings of the study state that women members of the Panchayat Raj institution could play an effective developmental role if they are given adequate recognition and encouragement.

Buch (2000), states that in the earlier studies of women representatives in the Panchayat before the 73rd Amendment, had noted the major presence of women from the dominant sections, e.g., the Marathas and families owing more than twenty acres of land in Maharashtra and Karnataka. But the profile of the new women in the Panchayats, post 73rd Amendment showed that the majority is illiterate and a large percentage were from families in the lower socio-economic strata.
Palanthurai (2001), in his study of Tamil Nadu observed that women have come to occupy positions in the local bodies as provisions have been made in the Constitution. The outlook of the society towards women has started changing. The author from his experience suggests that women continuously need orientation, sensitization, capacity building, information and counselling through organizations. The ongoing experiments and experience suggest that periodical training, orientation, and sensitization can help the women leaders to perform the assigned role in a better way.

Mohanty’s (2002), study on the impact of the 73rd Amendment in Orissa through field experience states that about 80-90% of women attend the Panchayat meetings regularly. Given the exact figure, one might conclude that democracy has become more participatory than before, at least at the grass-root level. Micro-studies also show that the working culture of the Panchayat has changed because of the presence of women. Finally, the increase in the female literacy rate can be attributed to the presence of the women in Panchayats and their willingness to get educated. An interesting finding from the above field experience is that even if women representatives depend on relatives, the power relation between husband and wife has already changed due to the reservation for women, the woman’s husband gets a chance to come into the public sphere because of the wife and the traditional structure is no longer seen in family relations. The studies also point out to the emergence of proxy women in the Panchayat, where the husband or brothers look after her official activities. However, Mohanty states, that only in the initial one or two years of the tenure, proxy women are seen as they gradually become independent.

Sinha (2004) in her article, ‘Women in Local Self-governance’ points out that deep poverty is a social and political phenomenon as much as an economic problem and requires political and social change, particularly within the field of power. The quest for equity cannot come about without wider representation of all groups; especially those currently denied access to power, and the presentation of all points of view in the process of decision-making. Revision of the current administrative and political structures, and their rules, is necessary in order to facilitate this broader representation and its translation into political power for those who are currently marginalized.
The author also points out that bringing women into power, is thus not only a matter of equity or correcting an unjust and unrepresentative system but also to promote the integrated development of the society. Political restructuring is the key to economic growth with justice. PRI also demonstrates that transforming the local councils into representative bodies means they are likely to be more environmentally protective, as the new members have a greater stake in their local natural resources. PRI in India offers an opportunity to women to change the face of political leadership. But we still have to ensure that these are spaces where women can go to negotiate for power.

Devaki Jain (1996) found that usually women covered under this study are of 25-45 years of age. Twenty percent of the women had previous political experience. The pattern of caste representation was the same as before the constitutional amendment; 60% of the elected representatives, whether men or women were from the dominant castes. Most of the women elected were illiterate and a majority of the women declared themselves as homemakers. She found that the women’s experience of Panchayat raj institution transformed many of them. The elements of this transformation include empowerment, self-confidence, political awareness, and affirmation of information. She argued that women have gained a sense of empowerment by being able to assert control over resources, officials, and most of all by challenging men. Further, women’s empowerment challenged the traditional ideas of male authority and supremacy.

Singh, Surat’s (2004) article presents the findings of an empirical study of the elected women representatives of the Panchayat raj institutions of Haryana by exploring the extent of their empowerment as a result of the implementation of the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution which made provision for the reservation of one-third share for women in these institutions. It also aims to present some suggestions for making the participation of women effective in these institutions of decentralized rural governance. He concluded with several suggestions, namely, the men’s negative attitude towards women members, attitudinal change among both men and women, education of women, community organizations encouragements (SHGs, Mahila Mandal, etc.) regular attendance in the meeting, encouragement from family and local community, and media are quite important to change the environment for the women to participate in local governance quite effectively.
2.8 Panchayat Raj and Grama Sabha

Grama Sabha is an important platform to record the voices of all eligible voters, including women, in rural communities. Diwakar (1963) in his study titled, ‘Report of study team on the position of Grama Sabha in Panchyath Raj Movement’ revealed that even in states where the institution of Grama Sabha had been introduced by statutes as early as 1947, it is sad to say that it has not been functioning in the real sense of the term. These Grama Sabha meetings are thinly attended and quorum is seldom achieved. The Committee found the body in bad shape and advocated a more restricted role for it and in the short run hoped that once the real power have been handed over to the Grama panchayat, the Grama Sabha would grow and find its rightful place in the Panchayat. The committee took the view that it is premature and dangerous to strengthen the Grama Sabha, which is amorphous at the expense of the village panchayat.

Tak (1972) has highlighted the importance of Grama Sabha to ensure real Grama swaraj. He concluded that the present set up of village panchayats under the three-tier system of Panchayat Raj is not based on ‘Lokneeti’ (People’s policy) and hence a number of new problems have emerged. For making Gram raj a reality, it is essential to organize Grama Sabha in every village with sufficient power, resources, and representation.

In another study, Bhatnagar (1978) analyses the issues and problems that have emerged from the functioning of the system. He says that the problem behind the slow growth of ‘Grama Sabha’ is a deep rooted problem; therefore, it is necessary to develop the Grama Sabha as a forum, where people could discuss all their problems relating to the village. Further, it is suggested that the urgent need of the hour is to strengthen the institution of the ‘Grama Panchayat’ where the political impact of Panchayat Raj has bought about a revolution. For the success of democracy, there is a need to decentralize power at the grassroots. The local government should also be constitutionally recognized and projected in the same way as the Central and State Governments.
Singh, S.P. (2004) in his article on ‘Capacity building of Grama Sabha for efficient local governance’ commented that “capacity building measures for Grama Sabha consist of creation of an enabling environment with appropriate policy and legal frameworks; institution building; human resource development and strengthening of managerial capacity. Capacity building measures also comprise developing community audit skills, facilitating a strategic plan and phased operational measures, and encouraging the monitoring and evaluation of progress.” For the emergence of the Grama Sabha as a body to which the Grama Panchayat is accountable, there is need to spell out the power and functions of the Grama Sabha in great detail, articulating its role as a planner, decision-maker, and auditor. Further, a massive awareness programme is required to educate the Grama Sabha on its role in planning, implementation, and audit of development programmes. This clearly spells the importance of the Grama Sabha and gives the real meaning of Gram Swaraj, where people have the right to decide and implement the required activity for the development of their village.

Jaamdar (1995) in his article on Grama Sabha in the new Panchayat system: concept and issues, concluded that, Grama Sabha will have to not just review the accounts and reports or select beneficiaries and development programmes, but also involve people in the implementation of local development works. This will help to augment the meager resources on one hand and improve the quality and speed of executing works on the other. To achieve these ends new modes of conducting Grama Sabhas will have to be evolved in place of wasteful speeches and rituals as presently seen. It cannot be used just to suit the political conveniences and designs of scheming senior or local leaders. Only then will the Grama Sabha play the vital role assigned to it. This in brief is the essence of grassroots democracy. It is a marriage of direct democracy, the former being the husband and the latter the wife: the adjustment between the two decides the degree of success of local democracy. He has concentrated more on the opportunity available and making use of the same. According to him, a Grama Sabha can play the village building role in all aspects.

Rengarajan (1997) in his concept of free India Gram Swaraj- a Gandhian perspective, discusses the depth of the Gandhian perspective of Gram Swaraj, in which the author says that the present–day scenario is far removed from the Mahatma’s comprehensive vision of a non-violent society based on truth and the
power of love without succumbing to the love for power. The material progress and lopsided prosperity have not contributed to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor. Gandhiji wanted India to follow a different pattern of holistic development that was not dominated by big machines and big businesses. His scheme of rural reconstruction was inspired by an integral approach to life. Lamenting that after Gandhiji’s exit, his vision of Gram Swaraj was reduced to a mere four-line Directive Principle in the Constitution, he points out that even the three-tier Panchayat institutions ushered in by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was not clothed with any power of self-government in the real sense.

Pal (2004) in his article on from ‘raj’ governance to ‘swaraj’ governance progress, *Performance and Perspective* concluded that the Panchayat raj as a system of local governance has a weak foundation because the concept of village Swaraj as visualized by the Father of the Nation has not been put into practice. The Central and State governments, instead of initiating policies which could strengthen the PRS, have used these institutions as agents for distributing funds to target groups. Among others, the purpose of the constitution of PRIs was to create a new leadership at the local level which would not only abjure obscurantism and backward looking attitude but also would be instrumental in changing the anti-development outlook of the traditional caste leaders in the village so that the people could achieve their collective aspiration of developing themselves holistically. It is therefore essential for Panchayats leaders to get organized and to form their associations at local, district, state, and national levels in order to enhance the Panchayats bargaining powers and enable themselves to learn from each other and extensively deliberate matters of common interest. But it may be cautioned here that the enlightened leaders of the Panchayats should come forward for this venture before it goes the way of the All India Panchayat Parishad which had lost its utility due to its internal factional rivalry. The author also stressed that the United Progressive Alliance Government headed by Dr. Manmohan Singh should take concrete steps towards enabling Panchayat leadership to become proficient “riders” and in performing their role effectively by getting adequate skill, knowledge, and attitude for local governance, planning, and development on a priority basis.
2.9 Problems of the Democratic Decentralization

The model of democratic decentralisation has witnessed several problems in rural India. Sharma (1976) has attempted to study the reforms in the Panchayat Raj since independence. The author has summed up analytically the major findings of the reports of the committees, study teams, etc. having a bearing on the problem of democratic decentralization and Panchayat Raj institutions. He has also indicated the emerging trends and the unfinished businesses. The study gives a brief but critical review of the various issues and inadequacies in an academic style.

2.10 Panchayat Raj and Politics

Political interference in the Panchayat Raj Institutions is a serious issue as noticed in rural India. Though the Panchayat Raj Act does not permit political party interference, it has not been possible to prevent it so far. Bhargava (1978) has dealt with the political and administrative roles in interacting situations in a given system. It has inferred that linkages between politicians and administrators may be vertical as well as horizontal. The political linkages thus functions as ‘one sided traffic’ in a vertical order, in which the high level politicians influence and pressurize the local leaders.

Darashankar (1979) discusses the interaction between caste and politics, the role of money, education and social rank in the working of Panchayat Raj Institutions in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra state. He suggested that the success of Panchayat Raj largely depends on the leaders who need to be deeply committed to the ideals of Panchayat Raj. The Panchayat Raj may not have brought all the expected benefits to the common man but has brought new changes in various fields. There is hope that with the emergence of a sound, enlightened, and committed leadership these institutions will function for the betterment of the rural community as a whole.

Bhargava (1979a) attempted to analyse the leadership in the Panchayat Raj system in one of the districts of Jhunjhunu of Rajasthan. He said that the profile of leadership in the Panchayat Raj system shows perceptible differences from the model of traditional rural leadership and this leadership may be called neo-traditional. The weaker sections do not get sufficient representation in these institutions. Finally, he suggested that there is a need for effective training at the grassroots level leadership for the effective operation of the local government system and for saving the state and central level democratic institution from the likely dangers which the grassroots leadership may pose.
He further examined the achievements and role of the political parties in Rajasthan (1979b). He maintained that there was too much politics and the benefits of these institutions were enjoyed by only the leaders and their associates. ‘Power Orientation’ of political parties is understandable, but not at the cost of the functioning of the system. The authors suggest that for raising the “standards of politics” and the “performance improvement” of the political parties in relation to the Panchayat Raj system, steps should be taken in the direction of its (systems) acquiring reasonable level of legitimacy.

Sahib and Swinder (1986) made an attempt to provide a comprehensive and objective analysis of both the rural and urban segments of local government in Punjab and Haryana. The recommendations of the various committees appointed by the Central and State governments from time to time have been discussed. The authors point out that the majority of political leadership at the state level still considers the local level as a rival center of power. The states are continuing with the process of superseding the Panchayat Raj and urban local government institutions. Power jealous state politicians use the absence of a constitutional guarantee to cripple these institutions and are not likely to discontinue from doing so in the future. The authors are of the view that two major hindrances, i.e., inimical state politician’s and suffocating diarchy at the district level are still very much evident. Consequently, efforts to activate local government institutions are likely to face serious challenges.

2.11 Panchayat Raj Administrations

Transparent and effective functioning of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in implementing development programmes is the major challenge. Kumar and Venkataraman (1974) examine the administrative, financial, and technical aspect of supervision and control in Tamil Nadu. It has been realized that the way in which control is exercised depends, very much on the linkages of officials and non-officials who are connected with the Panchayat Raj movement.

Pant (1979) tries to delineate the sources and areas of conflict, cooperation, and collaboration between officials and non-officials in the Bhagalpur district of Bihar and also tries to find out the reasons for the prevailing state of affairs. He
concludes that structural reforms are not the panacea for the ills affecting the Panchayat Raj. Placing officials under non-officials might create problems of greater dimensions. There is a need for committed non-official leadership and efficient, development minded officers. This can only be possible if the larger socio-political culture of officials and non-officials undergoes significant changes.

Prasad (1980) focused his attention on the administrative aspects of the village panchayats with particular references to the operational dynamics in achieving the objective of rural development in a village in Andhra Pradesh. He suggested that for the good administration of panchayats there is a need for more powers, trained staff, and proper supervision and guidance to these institutions. The existing administrative and organizational approach to rural development does not seem to have encouraged the growth of popular interest, awareness, and participation. In the rural development programmes, especially for the rural poor, in a sharply inegalitarian society like ours depends very much on the above mentioned conditions. This requires political mobilization of the disadvantage sections at the grassroot level. For this, the proposal by former planning commission member Raj Krishna, that public funds be used “for unionizing the rural poor,” merits attention. Yet another important constraint is that local bureaucracy does not seem to have adequately understood the implication of participatory rural development from the perspective of intended relationship between the administrators and the rural poor and these representatives. To understand this better bureaucratic reorientation is needed, which is essentially a problem of socialization into the values of the new institutional set-up.

Sharma (1984) examined the administrative efficiency, political factors, and socio-economic background of the elected panchayats non-officials in the Bhankrot’s village panchayats of Jaipur district of Rajasthan. He said that the resultant administrative deficiencies were aggravated by the injection of the political element in the official non-officials relationship and changes in administrative policies regarding staff and transfers. The existing rules are inadequate regarding auditing. He suggested that the Grama Sabha should be given statutory recognition and remain as an advisory agency. Sufficient steps should be taken to see that compliance of audit reports are made satisfactorily in time.
Desai (1990) deals with a source readings of Panchayat Raj and analysed its historical perspective. He has paid attention to the social and economic thought which other surveys, concentrating on political thought, have generally omitted. He studied systematically the varied issues of Panchayat Raj and its administration which will provide the necessary momentum to development in India and pleads for accelerated development of rural areas which is essential for a balanced growth of the Indian economy. He also emphasizes the importance of the Panchayat Raj in the implementation of multi-directional programmes in rural development. He analyses the relevant problems of functions, finances, management, and the organizations of programmes initiated to improve the living conditions of the rural people. It contains relevant suggestions and management for speedy rural development.

Democracy is not entirely new to India, for its roots could well be found in our old Panchayat Raj system. This system probably came into being because the villages and the people were too distant from the centre of political life. Everyone has a vote, in economic matters everyone has equal opportunities, in our panchayats also everyone should be considered.

2.12 Grama Panchayat and Caste and Class

Reservation to the SC, ST and backward classes in Panchayat Raj Institutions was on the basis of social justice and gender equality. Rao (1980) focused on the significance of ‘dominant caste’ class and power structure in Grama Panchayats which invariably influence the role of these bodies in administering rural development with social justice in the Tumkur district of Karnataka. He found that the power structure in the Grama Panchayat was in favour of the locally dominant caste and the economically rich classes with a reasonably good educational status, and the older age group controlled the power structure while the numerical strength had its own importance in capturing power. The emergence of such a type of power structure defeated not only the basic implications of democratic decentralization but also the aim of rural development with social justice. This study carried forward the idea of a cluster approach and unit ahead of development. It suggested in this study that the present system of representation of panchayats committees on the basis of population puts small villages at a disadvantage.
Nirmala Buch (2009) expressed that ‘the decision by the union cabinet to raise reservation for women from one-third to 50% of seats at all three levels of panchayats is a welcome one. However, this decision was taken without addressing the problems caused by mandatory rotation of reserved seats, which women have been drawing attention to and the impasse over the women’s Reservation Bill remains. The latter in particular suggests that the 50% reservation in Panchayats is a sop to cover up the government’s inability to ensure reservation for women in Parliament and state legislatures.

2.13 Panchayat Raj Audit

Social Audit was a weapon to the people to ensure the optimum use of resources and quality of work undertaken by the Grama Panchayats. Jain (2001) mentioned in his article on ‘Audit of Panchayat Raj Bodies some issues’ that the officials and non-officials in the Panchayat Raj bodies who handle public money will have to satisfy the taxpayer about the proper utilization of the amounts placed at their disposal. This necessitates the audit of accounts of all such bodies by an agency not subordinate to the expending authorities. It is with this object in view that an independent auditor is appointed as a watch-dog on behalf of the taxpayer. The auditor has to certify, inter alia, that the amounts advanced to the Panchayat Raj bodies as grants-in-aid have been utilized by them for the purpose for which they are advanced. He has also to ensure regularity and propriety of expenditure of public money and its proper accounting.

The recognition of the Grama Sabha as the primary body to review the activities of the Grama Panchayats under the 73rd Constitutional Amendment has added a very significant and interesting dimension as far as the accountability of these bodies is concerned. According to the provisions made in different Panchayat Raj Acts, the annual accounts including the audit report are required to be submitted to the Grama Sabha for review and approval by the people’s body. Naturally, the Grama Sabha will have to play a more effective role in carrying out what can be termed as ‘Social Audit’ which can be more effective than the functional audit. He also mentioned some of the issues which need to be addressed to make the PRIs accountable through audit such as: the audit system, adequacy of audit machinery, model system of budget and accounting, follow up of audit, involvement of professionals, role of account general, social audit, and training for the Grama Panchayat staff.
2.14 Research Lacunae

The detailed review of literature has enabled the researcher to conceptualise the research problem and understand the status of elected women representatives in Panchayat Raj Institutions with reference to Grama Panchayats. It is found that across India including Karnataka, the active participation of elected women representatives in Grama Panchayats is not seen so significantly. It is to be noted that, a good number of studies are made on Panchayat Raj Institutions, in general. There are studies on Democratic Decentralisation and its role in seeking people participation in the development process. There are also studies made on providing reservation for the weaker sections in Panchayat Raj Institutions. But there are very few studies on the role of elected women representatives in the Grama Panchayats in Karnataka. Hence, it is worthwhile to take up a study on the participation of elected women representatives in the Grama Panchayats of Chamarajanagara (relatively backward) and Udupi (developed) districts of Karnataka with a wholistic perspective. This would certainly enrich the existing body of knowledge on gender equality in Local Self Government and community development.
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