PREFACE

Today, even after about three decades of planning, about 70 per cent of the population in India is still directly dependent on agriculture and 80 per cent of the people live in the rural areas. Agriculture has a crucial role in its economic development. The Five Year Plans, realising the crucial importance of agriculture and allied programmes in the Indian economy, have made appropriate allocations for such programmes, and wanted to make use of the local self-government institutions in rural areas as vehicles of rural development. The study team headed by Sri Balwant Ray Mehta, observing that community development had suffered for lack of association of people's representatives, proposed 'Democratic Decentralization', an organically linked three-tier system of local self-government bodies upon which all the development work within their jurisdiction should be developed. This system, popularly now known as 'Panchayati Raj', was set up in different states beginning with Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan in 1959.

About two decades later, the Asoka Mehta Committee Report (1978) recognised the structural weaknesses in the Panchayati Raj System. It noted that bureaucracy and lack of political will also contributed to its weakening. It reiterated the need for decentralization and also felt that it should be regarded as functional necessity and not as an
act of political charity. Yet the mood of despondency about the status of Panchayati Raj, which was reflected in the draft of the Sixth Five Year Plan, still continues. In recent years there has been heavy emphasis on poverty alleviation through beneficiary oriented Integrated Rural Development Programme, but no specific important role was envisaged for the PRIs in its implementation.

The functioning of PRIs in Andhra Pradesh has been reviewed by two high level committees appointed by the Government of Andhra Pradesh - one in 1971 and the other in 1979, both chaired by C. Narasimham, a retired officer of the Indian Administrative Service, who had at one time been the Development Commissioner of the State. The Samithis and Zilla Parishads in Andhra Pradesh between 1975 and 1980 had no non-officials and functioned under special officers appointed by the Government. The elections to Panchayats and Samithis in 1981 were based on the recommendations of Narasimham Committee.

Telugu Desam, the Party which emerged victorious in the elections to the Legislature of Andhra Pradesh in 1983 and again in 1985 has brought about changes in revenue administration by establishing the revenue mandals in May, 1985 and replaced the Panchayat Samithis by the Mandal Praja Parishads in 1987 with a much reduced territorial jurisdiction. Elections on party lines to the posts of Presidents of Mandal Praja Parishads and Chairmen of Zilla Praja Parishads have been held in March in 1987.
An effort has been made in this dissertation to study the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Andhra Pradesh in the various developmental programmes. The field work was done in Chittoor District. This work is divided into seven chapters. A brief overview of the contents of each chapter is presented in the following paragraphs.

**Chapter I:** It introduces the theme, reviews the relevant literature, spells out the methodology and the scope of the study and presents the socio-economic background and other details of the various categories of respondents viz., the officials, non-officials, and the cross section of the heads of households.

**Chapter II:** It discusses the various approaches to rural development and describes the programmes resulting from these approaches. 'Participation', which has gained significance in this context, is analysed and the origin of Panchayati Raj - democratic decentralisation - in India is elucidated.

**Chapter III:** The organisation, functions and powers of Panchayati Raj Institutions and the DRDAs in Andhra Pradesh through which the developmental programmes are administered are described in the third chapter.
Chapter IV: It analyses the responses of officials and non-officials to the questions relating to performance of statutory development functions by PRIs, portrays the nature of relations between officials and non-officials in developmental programmes and provides a profile of the development in the selected district, blocks and villages.

Chapter V: It focusses on the analysis of the responses of officials and non-officials to matters relating to various aspects of the beneficiary-oriented programmes.

Chapter VI: It concentrates on the perceptions and opinions of the cross section - the sample - on various aspects concerning the set up of Panchayati Raj Institutions, the developmental programmes and their recent modifications.

Chapter VII: This, the final chapter, presents a coherent review of the findings and suggestions in the earlier chapter.