CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION
Rural development involves raising the socio-economic status of the rural population on a sustainable basis through optimum utilization of local resources, both natural and human. The essence of development is not in ‘providing’ but in ‘promoting’ the rural sector. The rural population should know how to sustain itself financially and gain economic independence. Therefore, the stress of rural development should be on self-reliance. Also, rural development should result in greater access to the rural population to goods and services.¹

Rural development in the context of the developing countries is essentially an attempt to improving the living conditions of the rural poor. During the 1950’s and early 1960’s development policies in the Third World countries centered on growth maximization. The poor were expected to gain from the ‘Trickle down’ of the benefits resulting from overall rapid growth, and within the framework of ‘modernization’ approach, development both as a process and end-result was considered dependent on a country’s administrative capacity. Bureaucracy was, therefore, viewed as the instrument of development.

By the late 1960’s it was realized that the benefits of rapid growth were not ultimately reaching the target groups. It was also noticed that the impact of rapid growth widened the gap between the poor and the rich. This called for a change in the concept and strategy of rural development.

¹
During the early 1970's such terms as 'redistribution with growth' 'growth with social justice' appeared. The idea of people's participation in the process of development was also emphasized by the scholars. The change of emphasis made rural development more broad based but the socio-economic structures that lie at the root of inequitable distribution of power and resources were not taken into serious consideration by the scholars.

Meaning of Rural Development

The Rural Development Sector Policy Paper of the World Bank (1975) observed that, rural Development is a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people-the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas. The group includes small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless. Again a World Bank publication defines rural development as, "improving the living standards of the masses of the low-income population residing in rural areas making the process of rural development self sustaining." ²

The World Bank definition of rural development is based inherently on an operational approach, constrained by the practicalities of allocating loan resources over a wide spectrum of countries, ensuring maximum economic returns to them. In a seminar on approaches to rural
development in Asia, discussions were centered around a definition of "rural development as a process which leads to a continuous rise in the capacity of the rural people to control their environment accompanied by a wider distribution of benefits resulting from such control." This definition is composed of three important elements:

1. Rural development should be viewed as a process of raising the capacity of the rural people to control their environment. Environment does not mean only agricultural or economic development. It includes all aspects of rural life-social, economic, cultural and political.

2. Rural development as a process should continuously raise the capacity of the rural people to influence their total environment, enabling them to become initiators and controllers of change in their environment rather than being merely the passive objects of external manipulation and control, and

3. Rural development must result in a wider distribution of benefits accruing from technical developments and the participation of weaker sections of the rural population in the process of development.

G.Parthasarathy opines that, "The critical element in the rural development is improvement of living standards of the poor through opportunities for better utilisation of their physical and human resources;
in the absence of this, utilisation of rural resources has no functional significance. Making the process of rural development self-sustaining not only implies the mobilisation of capital and use of technology for the benefit of the poor but their active involvement in the building up of institutions as well as in functioning of these.”

Michael Todaro views that, “Rural development encompasses:
1. Improvement in the levels of living, including employment, education, health and nutrition, housing and a variety of social services.
2. Decreasing inequality in the distribution of rural incomes and in rural-urban balances in incomes and economic opportunities, and
3. Increasing the capacity of the rural sector to sustain and accelerate the pace of these improvements.”

**Importance of Rural Development**

The emphasis on rural development in most developing countries is understandable. The majority of the population lives in the rural areas. As such, their backwardness would be retarding growth in other sectors and in the economy as a whole. The growth of towns and cities (urbanization) will be possible; it is backed by prosperity in rural areas. Rural backwardness is the major cause for the falling demand (recession) for most products.
The stress on rural development is also due to many constraints facing the rural areas, which generally suffer from inadequate infrastructural facilities and technological advancements. The rural areas are not well placed in terms of even minimum needs like safe drinking water, primary health and road transport. This apart, the rural population suffers from indigence, ignorance and illiteracy. Their traditional outlook towards development has been preventing them from taking full advantage of the incentives offered by the government. But with substantial exposure to media, both electronic and print media, the rural sector is moving towards self-reliance and economic independence. Also, the ownership of land and other assets have been heavily concentrated in the hands of a few. It is precisely for this reason that the benefits of rural development programmes failed to reach the rural population, targeted for these benefits to the extent expected.

So long as rural areas are deprived of minimum facilities, there will be rural exodus. Migration of rural people to urban areas has serious implications proving to be a burden on the available resources and facilities in urban areas.

**Nature and Scope of Rural Development**

Over the years, rural development has emerged as “a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of
people- the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development
to the rural population who seek a livelihood in the rural areas.6

Rural development is three dimensional in nature. As a method, it
seeks people's involvement in all programmes. As a process, it seeks to
modernize, through the application of science and technology, the
traditionally oriented rural cultures. Its major objective is to bring about
improvement in the quality of life of the rural people.

'Rural development' denotes overall development of rural areas
with a view to improving the quality of life of the rural people. The
concept is comprehensive and multi-dimensional in nature. It
encompasses development of agricultural and allied activities, cottage
and small scale industries, traditional crafts, socio-economic
infrastructure, rural manpower and improvement in community services
and facilities.

Rural development covers, besides agricultural development, a
comprehensive set of activities, pertaining to all aspects of rural
economy. It confers benefits on a number of classes like cultivators,
landless labour and rural artisans.
**Objectives of Rural Development**

Rural development programmes, in the Indian context, have aimed at achieving a number of objectives. These include:

(i). Changing the attitude of the rural people towards development / transformation of the village community.

(ii). Promotion of democratic leadership at the grassroots level by setting up local self-governments.

(iii). Provision of basic needs such as drinking water, health care, better sanitation, housing and employments.

(iv). Development of both farming and non-farming activities so as to generate gainful employment without adversely affecting the environment.

(v). Improving infrastructural facilities in villages, particularly transport and communication facilities, and

(vi). Ensuring a tension-free life for the rural population by promotion of communal harmony and unity, levels of literacy, education and cultural activities.

Rural development should have the following major objectives:

(i). Full employment of labour and physical resources.

(ii). Setting up of agro-industrial complexes.
(iii). Laying down minimum standards of productivity or efficiency for those owning or using precious resources.

(iv). Minimum standards of performance by public agencies by making them accountable to the local people and

(v). Creating a scientific temper which implies a changing of the mind and old habits of thought and action.

According the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific (ESCAP), the criterion for rural development involves:

(i). Drawing the entire rural labour force into the mainstream of economic activity.

(ii). Realizing the creative energies of the rural people.

(iii). Checking the drift of the rural population to cities.

(iv). Enhancing participation of women and youth in the rural development process.

(v). Improving the quality of life through integration between development and environment and

(vi). All-round development of the rural population by tapping the abundant manpower.

Rural development involves generating employment opportunities for the rural people so that they are able to meet their basic needs and ultimately become major agents of economic progress and social change.
A climate has to be created which enables the rural poor to realize their full potentialities to attain a higher quality of life with economic security to sustain themselves. This alone can prevent rural exodus.  

Rural Development Before Independence

The antecedents of the modern project of rural development in India can be traced back several centuries. According to William Moreland, an erudite British Agricultural Officer the idea of agricultural development was already present in the 14th century. There is considerable evidence to show that ancient and medieval rulers in India invested to increase productivity, especially in organizing irrigation. By the 14th century, the state was engaged in expanding markets and manufacturing by building transportation infrastructure. However, as Moreland has argued, the political and social environment during the period before the British was unfavourable to modern goals of development, because, military and political struggles undermined investments in farming, manufacturing, and banking, as pillage and plunder fed destructive armies and rapacious taxation fattened unproductive ruling elites. The rural development project received further impetus under British colonial rule, although its agenda was dominated more by concerns about the maintenance of law and order and of ensuring the stability of the state and the acquiescence of the governed, as well as
ensuring the supplies of cheap raw materials and cash crops for British industries.

During the colonial period the rapacious exploitation of the countryside to suit colonial economic interests resulted in the destruction of much of the rural infrastructure and institutional framework and their replacement by the modernization of the enclave economy, including railways and irrigation networks, along with the imposition of new property relations on the land, which did little to regenerate rural societies and marginalized large sections of the rural population. Unlike Western Europe and the United States of America where railways played a leading role in bringing about industrial transformation, in India they were instrumental mainly in the completion of colonization. Colonial rulers attempted the commercialization of agriculture and expansion of the politico-legal system to transform the agrarian economy through new land tenures. The main objective of their rural development strategy was increasing agricultural production that could be used (as raw material) for metropolitan industrialization and by bestowing the patronage of large land ownership to those trusted for delivering both political and economic favours in return.

The commercialization of agriculture along with higher land revenue imposed by the colonial administration had a fissiparous effect
on rural society and sowed the seeds of dualism in agriculture. On the one hand, it created a need for more working capital funds, which compelled the subsistence farmers to fall into debt. In consequence, widespread impoverishment and recurring famines in poorly endowed and un-irrigated areas became a feature of the British period owing to increasing cultivation of cash crops in preference to food crops and the needs of the growing population.

On the other hand, those who had land and other resources became wealthier by taking advantage of the demand for cash crops. The wealthy farmers and traders encouraged poor peasants to incur debts both for productive and unproductive purposes, snaring them into the debt trap, from which they could save themselves only by selling their land to the lenders. The usurers had an eye on the debtors' lands. When the debts reached breaking point they insisted that the debtors should dispose off their lands. This was facilitated by legalizing the sale of land to pay off the debt, a practice which was prohibited before the colonial rule.

On the whole, the cumulative impact of the British imperial rule, while providing the basic opportunities for the modernization of the rural economy, widened social disparities, without bringing any real improvement in rural livelihoods. As pointed out by Scott (1976), the imposition of capitalism and the development of the modern state under
colonialism had a profound effect on Indian agriculture. The first disrupted the agrarian order by transforming land and labour into commodities for sale, the second did so by enforcing the imposition of a market economy and by creating a new environment for the generation of peasant income. The privileged and the affluent remained in an advantageous position to consolidate their socio-economic position, and the lower rungs of the peasantry led miserable lives.

The post-independence governments tried to reverse the collateral damage on the rural economy and society caused by colonial exploitation but continued to pursue the objective of higher growth, albeit tempered by concern for social justice through state-led planned development. Although many nationalist governments in India tried to undo the iniquitous agrarian structure introduced during the colonial period through land reforms, their efforts were largely thwarted by feudal and semi-feudal elements that became influential in national politics. Their role was further enhanced by the need to accelerate the rate of growth in the agriculture sector and to convert the marketable surplus of large farmers into exports to finance the industrial development programmes.

The role of the rural sector in the initial stages of development in most South Asian countries was seen largely as one of generating surplus of physical (including human) and financial resources to step up the
industrialization process, concentrated in a few urban centres, which was adopted as the chief means of promoting economic growth and development. But nationalist leaders in India were cognizant of the need to eradicate widespread poverty in the rural areas and to undertake comprehensive plans for removing it. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, articulated this in one of his first speeches to the ruling Congress party soon after independence: Though poverty is widespread in India, it is essentially a rural problem, caused chiefly by over pressure on land and a lack of other wealth-producing occupations. India, under British rule, has been progressively ruralised, many of her avenues of work and employment closed, a vast mass of the population thrown on the land, which has undergone continuous fragmentation, till a large number of holdings have become uneconomic. It is essential, therefore, that the problem of land should be dealt with in all its aspects. Agriculture has to be improved on scientific lines and industry has to be established in its various forms so as not only to produce wealth but also to absorb people from the land. Planning must lead to maximum employment, indeed to the employment of every able-bodied person.

The post-colonial governments in India, often with assistance from foreign aid agencies, launched ambitious programmes of rural development to rebuild the physical and institutional infrastructure in the
countryside. However, these programmes often came to grief as a result of the multiple, often contradictory, goals they tried to achieve. The domestic and external policy milieu that emerged after the independence of these countries concentrated political and economic power in the hands of elites that were alienated from or had little empathy with the rural population. These factors contributed to an inordinate urban bias in the post-independence pattern of development and the consequent neglect of the rural sector.

**Mahatma Gandhi’s views on Rural Development**

One can not deny the influence of Gandhian ideas on post indent rural development programmes. Keeping in view of Gandhian concept of ‘village swaraj’ the central as well as state governments given top priority for the development of rural areas. According to Mahatma Gandhi, human resources are precious. For him, keeping human resources idle is a sin.

The Gandhian strategy of ‘rural reconstruction’ is based on his programme of ‘village swaraj’ and the ‘swadeshi’ movement. Under these two programmes, he introduced many apparently very simple activities like Charkha (spinning wheel and khadi – handmade cloth), revival of household/cottage industries and village handicrafts, village
sanitation and hygiene, basic education for harmonious development of the whole personality, etc.\textsuperscript{8}

Gandhi advocated a self-sufficient village economy and ‘self-reliant village community and emphasized the full utilization of local resources for development purposes. The villages would be self-sufficient as far as their basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, education, health, etc. are concerned. In certain matters, inter-dependence would also be necessary. No village can be totally self-sufficient, but it would strive to attain that goal.\textsuperscript{9}

Mahatma Gandhi considered that the village is the ideal social order. He saw an inherent contradiction in the city and the village. He declared that the village civilization and the city civilisation are totally different things. One depends on machinery and industrialization and the other on handicrafts. He wrote: “Independence must begin at the bottom, thus every village will be republic or panchayati having full powers.”\textsuperscript{10}

**Rural development Initiatives after Independence**

Rural development has been a major concern of our policy planners since the 1950’s. In 1952, the Community Development Programme (CDP) was launched. It was a multipurpose, opened programme of rural reconstruction. It was based on the philosophy that rural life was an
organic whole and no improvement in any sector was possible unless an attack was made on all sectors simultaneously.\textsuperscript{11}

The CDP failed to achieve the desired result primarily because of the lack of people's initiative and participation. The Balwanth Roy Mehta Committee felt the need for introduction of democratic institutions at the grass roots level to be known as Panchayat to ensure people's participation in the implementation of rural development programmes.

The country witnessed a spate of legislation and lot of enthusiasm for a very short while. "The institutions were killed", to use L.C.Jain's words, "before they were truly born" due to the absence of political will and bureaucratic neglect. The Ashok Mehta Committee had argued that the institutions started stagnating only after 1965 and they had worked well between 1959-1964. There is, in fact, no disagreement about the languishing of Panchayats after short period of their unhappy existence. To quote the L.M.Singhvi Committee Report, there was climate of optimism and resurgence, but within years of the inauguration of the new era, Panchayat Institutions began to sag, stagnate and decline."\textsuperscript{12}
Shift of focus in the Rural Development Programmes

During the 1960's, food shortages brought about a shift of focus in the rural development programmes. The community was pushed to the periphery. A new set of productivity oriented schemes such as intensive agricultural district programme, intensive agricultural area programmes were launched.

In 1966, India adopted a new strategy for agricultural development based on the use of high yielding varieties of wheat and paddy backed by a policy of remunerative prices to the farmers. This policy is based on the theory that poverty is rooted in the lack of economic growth.\textsuperscript{13}

Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Development Planning

The main responsibility of the Panchayati Raj Institutions is to accelerate the pace of development and involve all people in this process so that the felt needs of the people and their development aspirations are fulfilled. The decentralized planning is a multi-level planning process. It will have to start from lower level (Gram Panchayat), intermediate level (Mandal Parishad) and higher level (Zilla Parishad).

Panchayati Raj Institutions are expected to play an important role in planning and implementing various developmental programmes. One may recall that after independence, India has continuously implemented
development programmes with the objective of improving the social and economic conditions of the people. One of the major development attempts was the Community Development Programme (CDP) introduced in 1952. The Programme was not a success because of the lack of people's participation in it. It was followed by a series of development interventions, but people's participation continued to be a problem. In the mean time, however, the Central government continued to introduce various development initiatives to catalyse rural development. These, apart from community development and allied programmes in the 1950's, included target group approach programmes like Small Farmers Development Agency (SFDA) in the 1970's and employment generation and poverty alleviation programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP), etc., in the 1980's. When all such experiments failed, the policy makers turned towards the Panchayati Raj system in a more deliberate way. Earlier too, from time to time, the importance of the Panchayati Raj System as a mechanism for effective people's participation had got highlighted through the deliberations of various committees like Balwantha Roy Mehta Committee in 1957, Ashok Mehta Committee in 1977 and so on, but finally these deliberations found their expression in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act in 1993.
Now it is strongly felt that an effective Panchayati Raj System can bring about rapid and integrated development through people's participation. In all the recently restructured development programmes like SGSY, SGRY, etc., adequate provision has been made for their implementation through the Panchayati Raj institutions. Thus, the role of Panchayati Raj as a development institution assumes considerable significance.

It is an admitted fact that panchayats constitute the local governments of the people. A democratic government is one that involves people to take decisions about the activities that directly concern their locality and lives. Naturally, panchayats should allow and help the rural poor to participate in the developmental activities directly. For example, if a Gram Panchayat decides to build a school, dispensary or drainage system, the people who need these facilities should decide what kind of the school, dispensary, and drainage system they need. Panchayats should not keep people at a distance. No work or decision should be kept as a secret.

It is necessary that open meetings are held where all the people can meet and discuss the village problems and also anti-poverty programmes. It is the duty of the elected members of panchayats to
hold regular Gram Sabha meetings. These meetings will be immensely useful, if the following norms are kept in mind and followed sincerely:

(1). Explain anti-poverty and other schemes to the people very clearly in the language that they understand.

(2). Encourage the poor people to speak in these meetings, (Many people may be hesitant to give their views in a meeting for many reasons. The elected members should create an atmosphere that enables the people to speak without fear).

(3). Try to understand their views and thoughts, and

(4). Identify the people who are really poor.

There are a number of anti-poverty programmes under implementation in various states. In the changing scenario, panchayats are expected to play an important role in the planning and implementation of these programmes. As it is not possible to cover all the development programmes being or expected to be implemented by the Panchayati Raj institutions, the discussion here will be confined to the role of Panchayats in implementing some major centrally sponsored anti-poverty programmes.

A. Gram Panchayati Plan (GPP)

(1). Prepare Village Data Inventory (VDI) providing information of demographic features: physical infrastructure, land, forest, water,
mineral and other natural resources, economic activities such as agriculture, horticulture, sericulture, livestock, small and cottage industries, social services such as primary and adult education, health and sanitation, information on SC/ST families, destitutes, handicapped, poor widows and deserted women and old age.

(2). Convene Gram Sabha meetings and list out the felt needs of the village (or all constituent villages/hamlets of the Gram Panchayats). The felt needs could be: school building; health-sub-centre building; livestock centre and artificial insemination centre, drinking water, community hall, Panchayat Bhavan, Balwadi/Anganwadi building, sanitary drains, village market complex, link road, reclamation of waste and old fallow lands, pasture and grazing land, village forest, village pond/check dam, community irrigation.

(3). Prioritize the above items, estimate the investment required for individual items for a period of five years. The items may be identified on year wise basis according to priority.

(4). For items which need technical guidance and feasibility task, the concerned Extension Officers at the block level are to help in preparing feasible projects.

(5). Identify poor families for assistance under various poverty alleviation programme and the type of assistance, asset, vocation, required by them. Also identify beneficiaries for National Programme of Social
Assistance (NPSA) and prepare the list according to the assistance required.

(6). Village Plan and allocation of funds may be placed before the Gram Sabha for approval. It may be submitted to the Mandal Parishad after approval.

B. Mandal Parishad Plan

(1). Prepare Mandal Data inventory (MDI) of all items indicated in the Village Data Inventory (VDI) and all other items not included in the VDI such as secondary schools, Primary Health Centre (PHC), road accessibility, postal and telecommunication facilities, regulated marketing, agriculture marketing yards, small industries, irrigation, irrigation covering more than one Gram Panchayat, more than a Gram Panchayat.

(2). Aggregate all Gram Panchayat plans and link all schemes/projects proposed in GPPs to relevant rural development programmes and sectoral programmes.

(3). Identify activities covering more than one Gram Panchayat and list out gaps in terms of absence or inadequacy and improvement requirements, new construction, and deficiencies in various production activities, infrastructure and social services. This activity
should be carried out by all subject matter committees and finalise plan proposals.

(4). Aggregate Gram Panchayat-wise beneficiaries under various Poverty Alleviation programme and National Programme of Social Assistance (NPSA) according to type, size and nature of activities.

(5). Submit the plan proposals prepared by the subject matter committees to the subject matter specialists (MPDO, Extension officers and equivalent officers representing various sectoral departments) for technical and financial viability.

(6). Based on the report of the Extension Officers and Mandal Parishad Development Officer, list out all projects, prioritise them over a period of five years and separate the items for annual plan. Finally submit the plan to Zilla Parishad.

C. District Plan (DP)

(1). Consolidate all Mandal Parishads at the Zilla Parishad and disaggregate them item, year and cost wise according to their link with rural development programmes and sectoral programmes.

(2). Subject matter committees should identify gaps, inadequacies and future needs in physical and social infrastructure, deficiencies in all production sectors not included in Mandal Parishads and identify projects to improve and/or establish new units or the subject matter
specialists in different sectoral departments for technical and financial viability.

(3) After technical and financial viability prioritize all proposed projects and phase them over a period of five years and also disaggregate them according to their linkage with Rural Development programmes/sectoral programmes.

(4) Aggregate Mandal Parishad wise beneficiary schemes/projects under various Poverty Alleviation programmes and NPSA. Scrutinize the number of beneficiaries according to prescribed targets; phase them over five years an assess annual financial requirements (subsidy, loan and direct financial assistance/grant/pension, etc.).

(5) Finally, disaggregate all project proposals according to the agencies (such as DRDA, DPAP, DDP, etc.) and sector-wise (such as Agriculture, Horticulture, Sericulture, Livestock, Fisheries, Forests, Irrigation, Soil Conservation, Small and Cottage industry, PWD, Electricity, Education, Health, Rural Water Supply, etc.).

(6) Discuss plans with all departmental heads, bank representatives and finalize Decentralized District Plan (DDP) and District Credit Plan (DCP).

(7) Discuss DDP and DCP in a meeting with all ZP members and Departmental heads.
Present the plan before the District Planning Committee (DPC) for finalization and approval for both perspective plan and annual action plan.

Review of Literature

Here under an attempt is made to review the literature on Panchayati Raj system and rural development.


Dr. Neela Mukherjee (1996)\(^{15}\) in his article entitled; “Resource Sustainability Developmental Goals and Panchayati Raj Institutions” mainly discussed the significance of raising international resources and its sustainability for socio-economic development through Panchayati Raj Institutions. He concludes that the sustained levels of funds reduce uncertainty and lead to strengthening of community based action plans.
He says that there are no better substitutes to raising of resources by internal means in a sustainable manner.

P.L.D.V. Padmakar (1998) in his article entitled, "Panchayat Raj a Look Back" identified the main deficiencies like skewed distribution of benefits, failure to evoke popular support, inability to achieve common acceptance of the decisions due to factions among the villagers, lack of spirit in leadership, dominance of rich and large farmers, undue and too much political interference in the work of the development functionaries, paucity of funds, etc., in the functioning of the Panchayat system. He also holds that the role played by the holders of real power, both at the centre and state levels is also not to be overlooked, while examining the weaknesses of the system.

G.S. Mehta (2002) in his book entitled, "Participation of Women in the Panchayati Raj System" made an empirical analysis on the participation of women in PRIs in eastern and western regions of Uttar Pradesh. The major findings of his study are given below:

1. Illiterates, married, but young women belonging to backward castes and Muslims dominated the village Panchayats in the study area.

2. Nearly 1 per cent of women representatives have no freedom to go alone to participate in outdoor activities.
(3). Lack of co-ordination and co-operation among the women Pradhans of different village Panchayats in perusing certain common issues collectively before the meetings of Block Panchayats.

(4). The women were found to be participation in the different development programmes along with their male counter parts but the rate of participation of women as the beneficiaries was comparatively lower than men, and

(5). Around half of the women representatives of different village Panchayats had experienced at least some degree of changes as occurred in their social status, mainly through participating at local level social and cultural programmes.

K.S. Narayana (2003)\textsuperscript{18} in his essay entitled, “unending of debate on Rural Development Issues: A Relook at diagnostics-part II”, analyzed the social components of rural development viz., health, education, sanitation, etc., in a long term perspective. He stated that all our efforts to enlarge the health facility must rank highest priority with an allocation of 6 percent GNP. According to him continued lukewarm policy efforts would be a big liability to health of the nation, as a majority of rural people are confronted with health hazards, there by curtailing people’s contribution to the economy much less than potential lives. Health
insurance must be propagated, expanded and policy procedures simplified.

Ranbir Singh (2004)\textsuperscript{19} in his article entitled, "why the Panchayati Raj Institutions have not been Empowered so far" expressed that there is a general tendency to blame the political leaders and the bureaucracy for the lack of empowerment of the Panchayat Raj institutions. He also says that they are certainly responsible for it to some extent for this dismal situation. But the rural masses and their elected representatives in the Panchayati Raj institutions are equally responsible for the present state of affairs.

Shiv Raj Singh (2007)\textsuperscript{20} in his scholarly article entitled, "Reforms for Empowerment of Panchayati Raj Bodies" made a critical analysis of 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment Act, 1993. According to him the major drawback of the new Constitutional Amendment Act is bureaucratic interference in managing the rural local affairs. He bitterly criticized the provision of voting right to MP and MLA in the capacity of ex-officio members also lead to their dominance over PRIs, which is contrary to the spirit of decentralization.

the Panchayati Raj system in the tribal situation of Arunachal Pradesh. He makes an empirical analysis of the grassroots dynamics in Lohit District of Arunachal Pradesh State.

Dilip.K.Ghosh (2008)\textsuperscript{22} in his article entitled, "Governance at Local Level: The case of Panchayats in West Bengal", studies the progress in devolution of 3 FS (e.g. Funds, Functions and Functions) after 73\textsuperscript{rd} Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993, in the state of West Bengal. He considers, that local governance requires high degree of participation of people in planning and implementation of the programmes. He also discusses the provisions of the West Bengal Panchayat Act made by the state government to bring transparency and accountability in the panchayats.

M.Govinda Rao and U.A.Vasantha Rao (2008)\textsuperscript{23} "Expanding the Resources Base of Panchayats: Augmenting own Revenues" argues that it is necessary to take a re-look at the tax powers of Panchayats. They consider that it is important to build administrative and enforcement capacity. For building such capacity an essential pre-condition according to them is to create a reliable data and information system.

the various aspects of rural development in the context of globalisation. He reviewed and evaluated the functional competence of Panchayat Raj institutions in different parts of the country in Gandhian terms. Through his reviews he found that except in a few states like West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, the Panchayat Raj institutions have been rarely given a chance to perform their functions on a sizable scale.

E.A. Narayana (2008) in his book entitled, "Panchayat Raj in Action: A study in the context of Andhra Pradesh" makes an attempt to discuss the various issues and problems and offers valuable suggestions to activate the Panchayati Raj institutions. The study is based on an extensive field research, differently carried in three districts of three regions of the state, by taking two sample mandals from each district. The study covers a broad spectrum of Panchayat Raj institutions like organizational structure, powers, functions, personnel, finances and overall performance.

Yatindra Singh Sisodia (2008) in his essay entitled, "People’s participation in Gram Sabha through Gram Swaraj: Evidences from villages of Madhya Pradesh" says that the Madhya Pradesh was the first state to enact State Panchayat Act as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and organized election in 1994 to PRIs. He further says that the amendment to the Madhya Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 in
2001 for Gram Swaraj has taken special care of the decisive role of weaker sections of society. He concludes that participation in Gram Sabha meetings has been low despite the people knowing about the inbuilt advantages of the Gram Swaraj.

N.S. Gehlot (2008) in his essay entitled, “Rural Development Through Panchayati Raj Institutions: Strengthening a Participatory Democracy in India” discussed the issues like reviving rural India, Bharat Nirman Programme, single land acquisition, accountability of NGOs and civic bodies, etc. He clearly stated that grassroots empowerment is more important than grassroots development. He concludes that democracy in India has to move from elections to development and the same has to be extended to all organizations and institutions.

C.Siva Murugan and Dr. V. Anbumani (2008) in his essay entitled, “Community Participation in Rural Development”, expressed hopes that India might have lost a few battles against poverty but now with people’s participation, it will win war. They made a bird’s-eye-view of community development programmes and the success and failures of these programmes. The study mainly concentrated on Bharat Nirman Programme. They consider that people’s participation is a pre-condition of any development programme and now a condition of survival for the civil society.
Pranab Bardhan, Sandip Mitra, Dillip Mukherjee and Abhirup Sarkar (2009) in their article entitled, “Local Democracy and Clientelism: Implications for Political Stability in Rural West Bengal” examined the factors underlying the unusual stability of political power in rural West Bengal, using data pertaining to the functioning of local democracy from a household survey conducted by the authors during 2003-2005. They also examined patterns of political awareness, participation, distribution of benefits by Gram Panchayats and voting across households of verifying socio-economic characteristics. The main findings of their study are as follow:

(1). Political participation was high on average,

(2). Within villages Panchayati benefits formed to poor and Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes groups on par or better, compared with the rest of the population,

(3). Distribution of benefits across villages was based against those with more landless households, and

(4). The lasting political success of the left owed partly to a clientelist relationship of the party with the voters, and partly to the gratitude of voters of low socio-economic status arising out of broad-based changes.
It is evident from the above review of literature that some of the studies concentrated on financial aspects of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. These writers considered the finance as life and breath of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Some of the studies are centred to explain the main provisions of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and its implications on various facets of rural local self government. Whereas some studies are confined to a particular state and particular aspect of the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The studies on the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions on rural development is very limited or almost nil. Moreover, there are no studies on the role of rural local self government in the implementation of rural development programmes in drought prone district of Anantapur.

**Statement of the Problem**

One of the tasks stressed from the beginning of Panchayati Raj activities was to assist for the development of rural areas. This has been held to be the objective of various plans, programmes and schemes. The successive Five Year plans and the programme evaluation organizations underlined the need of equitable distribution of fruits from development and the people’s participation in the plans of rural development. The welfare services such as health care, housing, water supply, rural roads, nutrition, tribal development and social welfare are being provided with a
view to offer reasonable opportunities to the rural masses in general and under privileged sections in particular.

Today the challenge of rural poverty can not be met without the active involvement of Panchayati Raj. Panchayats are looked upon as a means to achieve socio-economic transformation of our rural societies. With this noble aim, Panchayati Raj institutions have been introduced in India. Panchayati Raj has been made its way from its uncertain past to its so significant present, inspite of the so many adverse situations it had to encounter on its march. Now it is generally believed that the socio-economic benefit of Panchayati Raj and rural development has not gone to the needy people.

The introduction of this system in Andhra Pradesh as elsewhere had aroused lofty expectations in the minds of the rural masses, especially downtrodden sections of the society. But these institutions do not appear to have made much impact on the development of rural areas. Hence, the study entitled, “Role of Panchayati Raj Institutions in Rural Development with Special Reference to Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh” is a humble attempt to analyse, evaluate and assess the role of Panchayati Raj institutions in the development of rural areas in Anantapur district.
Scope of the Study

Panchayati Raj institutions are studied from different points of view, viz., as an extension of democratic decentralization to the village level, as an agency of government to implement the developmental programmes/schemes, etc., but the proposed study looks at Panchayati Raj institutions from purely developmental point of view. The whole study centres around the role of Panchayati Raj institutions in rural development.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to assess:

(1). The impact of Panchayati Raj bodies on the socio, economic, political life of the rural masses.
(2). The role of Panchayati Raj institutions on the development of rural infrastructure, alleviation of poverty, providing employment opportunities in rural areas.
(3). Perceptions of the people on the functioning of Panchayati Raj bodies in relation to their development.
(4). Attitudes and style of functioning of local body representatives, and
(5). Participation of people in Panchayati Raj activities/programmes, as functionaries and beneficiaries.
Hypotheses

(1). Participation of people in Panchayati Raj activities is not up to the mark.

(2). Majority of the people and their representatives unanimously resolve that rural development programmes are useful for the development of rural areas.

(3). The fruits of development are not properly reaching the real needy people.

Study Area

The field investigation of the problem has been carried out in Anantapur district, which is well known for droughts in the whole country. In terms of area Anantapur district is the largest district in Andhra Pradesh. As per 2001 statistics, the population of the district is 36.40 lakhs, out population of the district 36.40 lakh, out of which 27.21 lakh people are living in rural areas. The percentage of Scheduled Castes to total population of the district is 14.14 per cent and that of the Scheduled Tribes is only 3.49 per cent. In the district there are 6.71 lakh agricultural labourers, and 5.29 lakh cultivators.

Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary sources of material have been used in the collection of data on Panchayati Raj in general in the district and
more specifically on the rural development programmes *vis-à-vis* Panchayati Raj institutions in the district. For the collection of primary data two Interview Schedules were prepared for administrating on the respondents. They are, schedule-I relating to beneficiaries of rural development programmes. Schedule-II for the people’s representatives at Village Panchayati level, Mandal Parishad level and Zilla Parishad level. For the illustration of the data, tables, percentages and charts have been used wherever necessary.

The secondary data has been collected from the published books, journals, periodicals, published reports, action plans, unpublished theses, official documents, brochures and official records. Data has been collected from the various offices like District Panchayat Office, Mandal Parishad Offices, office of the Zilla Parishad, Research Institutions, and different Libraries.

**Sample Design**

For in depth study on the impact of rural development programmes on beneficiaries, one mandal, each from the three Revenue divisions of Anantapur district was selected by simple random sampling method for administrating Interview Schedule-I. In the second stage from each selected mandal, 90 sample beneficiary respondents of rural development programmes were selected purposively. The total sample
respondents are 270. Interview Schedule-II was purposively administered on 90 local body representatives of three tiers of Panchayati Raj institutions in three Revenue divisions of Anantapur district at the rate of 50 representatives from lower tier, 25 from middle tier and 15 from upper tier.

Organization of the Study

The study is divided into Eight Chapters.

Chapter-I : INTRODUCTION

It deals with the meaning, nature, scope, need, importance and objectives of rural development. It also contains theoretical frame work of the study.

Chapter-II : ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN INDIA AND ANDHRA PRADESH

It focuses attention on the evolution of Panchayati Raj system in India and in Andhra Pradesh up to the present day.

Chapter-III : STRUCTURAL PATTERN OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS

It emphasizes on the structural pattern of PRIs in general which is also the pattern prevalent in the study area. Special attention has been focused on the powers and functions of these institutions.
Chapter-IV  : ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING OF THE ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

It concentrates on the environmental setting of the study area, namely, Anantapur district. This chapter gives an overview of the physical and demographic setting of the district which has been selected for the study.

Chapter-V  : ROLE OF PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN ANANTAPUR DISTRICT

It elaborately discusses the importance of the on-going rural development programmes like NREGP, Watershed Programme, Indira Kranthi Pathkam, Housing, etc.

Chapter-VI : PEOPLE’S PERCEPTIONS ON PANCHAYATI RAJ INSTITUTIONS IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

It also explains about the socio-economic background of sample respondents. It analyses the responses of the sample beneficiary respondents on various rural developmental programmes.
Chapter VII : LOCAL BODY REPRESENTATIVES PERCEPTIONS ON PRI AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

It registers and assesses the views of Panchayati Raj Representatives on the functioning of PRIs in relation to rural development.

Chapter VIII : CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

It deals with conclusion of the study and some of the suggestions offered based on the study.
References


3. Ibid, P.17.


