Chapter – II

Review of Literature
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REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Some works on Panchayati Raj Institutions are reviewed in this chapter.

Significance of the Review of Literature:

Review of Literature is a significant part of any research. The investigator acquires information about what has been done in the field of study, gather up-to date information about previous researches in the area and obtains information on the topic of investigation. A familiarity with available literature in the area of research is required for making new grounds and the proper designing of the study. Review of related studies further avoids duplication of the work that has already has been done in that area. It also helps the investigator to study the various aspects of the concept in its multi – dimensional perspective.

The present study is on Panchayati Raj in Andhra Pradesh after 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. However, the review of related literature shows that there are few studies, which were conducted in the state and other parts of the country on this topic.

Panchayati Raj in India:

Mishra S.N. and Singh S.S. (1993) discussed three alternative roads for the success of PR in India. The book covered the comparative legislation frame work of eight states in the country, prior to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and also analyzed comparatively the various constitutional amendment bills, which were introduced in the parliament.

Hoshiar Singh (1993) discussed the conceptual aspect, working, shortcomings and suggestions for strengthening the PR in India. According to him 73rd Amendment Act will help to revitalize PR which is essential for rural development and decentralization.

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Nirmal Mukherjee (1993) wrote that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act requires the states to constitute panchayats at village, intermediate and district levels and consequently there will be a three-tier government viz. the union, the states and the panchayats. He opined that these panchayats would prepare and implement the plans for economic development and social justice as entrusted to them including the matters listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

Khanna B.S. (1994) explained the history of the evolution of PR system in the Country and provided a critical review of its growth, decline and revival as well as a detailed description of PR institutions in ten major states in the country.

Hoshiar Singh (1994) discussed, the evolution of PR after independence and its working, shortcomings, reasons for decline and the need for the constitutional base for the PR in India. He opined that despite some weaknesses and certain lacunae, 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is a step toward decentralization of powers at grass root levels and to strengthen PR in the country.

George Mathew (1994) focused on the historical background of PR and the role of women and political parties in it. He emphasized the need for a strong people’s movement in spite enacting the legislation on PR. He also cited Kerala experiment of PR in support of his views.

Ashoka Bajpai and M.S. Verma (1995) discussed the historical background and evolution of PR in India and salient features of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and state wise comparative picture of PR in the Country. They also explained the main characteristics of PR Acts passed by sixteen major states of India after the enactment of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and provided the latest information about comparative position of the model adopted by the different states.

Bidyut Mohanti (1995) opined that it was necessary to create positive and healthy socio-economic and political conditions to enable women to participate actively and effectively in PRIs. According to him, women’s reservation in PRIs provided under 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act is leading to their empowerment in real sense.
George Mathew (1996) discussed several reasons for unsatisfactory conditions prevailing regarding transfer of powers to PRIs and made recommendations to fill up the gap between their finances and functions. He emphasized the need for financial autonomy of PR institutions, which could be achieved through the political will of the state governments.

Indira Rajaraman Bohra O. P, Ranganathan. V. S. (1996), opined that even if the new tier of local governance mandated by the 73rd Amendment is visualised merely as a shift in the point of delivery of certain functions previously discharged by higher levels of government, so that the problem of fiscal devolution simplifies to one of ensuring fiscal transfer to match the functional transfer. It must be remembered, however, that the introduction of a new tier of governance, even if seen in the very limited light of a transfer of functions from pre-existing tiers, has to be accompanied by some revenue additionality if only to cover the incremental establishment costs of governance. This is particularly so in the case of the rural sector, and is the limited focus in the panchayats. But if the intention is improved delivery, the need for additional revenues is even greater. A flat share of aggregate state revenues for local bodies, although an attractively simple solution and in line with the recommendations of the Tenth Finance Commission on centre-state sharing, focuses attention away from the revenue additionality that is critically required for this experiment in decentralised governance to succeed.

Mishra S.N. (1996) emphasized the need for strong resource base of PRIs in India after 73rd Constitutional Amendment. He examined the fiscal provisions of the Act and opined that these institutions had been overburdened with a large number of functions without adequate financial, technical and administrative support.

Meenkashi Sundram (1997) highlighted some of the provisions of the 73rd constitutional Amendment Act which may require a possible modification. The author felt the elected representatives should be made accountable to the electorate through the Gram Sabha.
The author felt that structure of the PRIs envisaged under the Act district has been defined as a normal district in a state, the jurisdiction of the village and intermediate levels has not been specifically defined in the Act. The author also pointed out that any amendment enlarging the scope of Article 243 (G) would be in order now, is a point for public debate. It may be stated that functioning goes where there is money, regardless of any list. Consequently, it is more important to install a new financial regime that to diverse new lists. The second SFCs cannot set up before the expiry of five years from the date when these were first set up. Unless the financial devolution from centre to the states and the PRIs is put on realistic and sound footing, no functional devolution can become meaningful.

Vital C.P. (1998) discussed the Implementation of the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act in various states. The author felt that almost all the states were faced with problems on the issues of devolution of powers, finances, staffing of Panchayati Raj and inter linkages within different tires of Panchayati Raj. The author pointed out that the over all scenario of Panchayati Raj in the country was dismal. The functions assigned to the PR do not cover all aspects of rural life. The panchayats do not have their personnel in key positions all through. The state government frequently makes interventions in their day – to – day functioning there by reducing them to non – entities. With the results they cannot function effectively. The major draw back of the system is that very little power has been entrusted of the PRIs. The developmental works are largely handled by the government and also discontinued at times at its will. The author also noted that the panchayats did not have personnel of their own. They are appointed and also transferred by the government. The author suggested that scrapping of emergency powers of the state government to dissolve panchayats.

Jha P.K. and Chandana Jha (1999) examined the nature, content and impact of both the rural development programmes as well as the institutional structure of PR on the rural poor and deprived people. They have also analyzed as to how far PRIs have been successful in ensuring effective peoples participation in implementation of poverty alleviation programmes.
Choudhury R.C and Jain S.P (1999) analyzed the Implementation of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The authors argued that the degree of autonomy and devolution of functional and financial powers were also left to the discretion of the State Governments. In most of the states, no serious exercise has been carried out to devolve powers and functions to the three tiers in a balanced way keeping in view the principle of subsidiary. Concerning the position of gram sabha, the authors felt that almost all the State Acts have provided for the gram sabha but its functions and authority have not been spelt out in detail. Consequently, these institutions, by and large, continue to function ineffectively. The absence of women folk in the meetings of gram sabha was a common feature. The participation of the people belonging to the weaker sections was also minimal. Regarding to SFCs the authors pointed out that the reports of the SFCs had not attracted serious attention from many of the State Governments. Finally, the authors stated that the gaps noticed in various states vis-à-vis the 73rd Constitutional Amendment can be filled only through national consensus and commitment to the cause of decentralized governance.

Bhora O.P. (2000) examined the implementation of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. He felt that the 73rd Amendment Act provides for a uniform three-tier structure of Panchayats and also specified the areas of responsibility of these bodies. However, he noted that there were a large number of responsibilities assigned to these bodies. The author suggested that the overlapping in their functions should be eliminated to ensure the smooth functioning of these bodies.

Indira Rajaraman and Garima Vasishtha (2000), observed that economic efficiency requires that taxes to cover the cost of public goods should be raised from within the beneficiary space of each, and that local public goods carrying a distinctly local spatial reach (sanitation, water, street lighting, law and order) should be paid for by taxes collected locally from property taxation or user charges. Health and education, even though these carry a wider spatial reach, also fall well within the functional domain of local government.
The problem with the way decentralisation has been conceptualised in India is that the prescribed local functional domain extends far beyond that definable as purely local in terms of spatial reach, and there has been no attempt to define a commensurate local fiscal domain. Thus, inter governmental grants become necessary for vertical equity, and that carries with it the possibility of reduced own tax effort of the kind observed in the Kerala context.

Robert Thorlind (2000) in his study presents a different picture Gram sabha and Gram Sansads do not function effectively. Gram Sansad is still in a process of learning and adoption, but they may become important instruments for democratic accountability and participation in the future. It requires awareness among the disadvantaged classes, and practical learning of democratic procedures from their own work as panchayat members. He was in argument with the observation of the working group on decentralized planning which observed “.....items listed as responsibilities in the states are couched in vague terms. A glance of the variety of these items reveals that they are a shopping list of sectors and sub sectors, broad activities in a sub – sector and activities in sub – activities / specific responsibilities under a broad activity, with no role clarity .... In some states the line departments still exercise the powers of supervision and control over the schemes of subjects transferred to the Panchayats”. (GoI, 2001: 9)

Aureliano Fernandes (2001) opined that the 73rd Constitutional Amendment appeared to be revolutionary character. Still, it did not transform PRIs into institutions of self government, as no real powers were not given to panchayats. The author pointed out the fact that it was mandatory to call meetings of gram sabha, and the failure of the panchayats to consider the resolution passed by gram sabha was considered a gross irregularity. In most places formality was observed; proxy meetings at times were convened and proceedings were written even without the knowledge of those who attended. Meetings arranged, either proved to be abortive or unsuccessful because of thin attendance. The participation of women was nominal.
The author feels that panchayats in India are faced with a demand overload—too many demands and meagre funds to deliver and meet these demands, hence leading to an implementation deficit. In Goa, the panchayats have not been allocated a single subject of the 29 formalized under the XI schedule with only residual functions of implementation of central and state schemes, allocated to them. The author has suggested that in the new millennium there is an urgent need to move away from the political contract back again to the social contract to produce a community-owned government.

Siva Subrahmanyam. K (2002) argued that the post Seventy Third Amendment Act had not significantly altered the functional domain of the panchayats. The author felt that the PRIs in several states were not very clear about specific role in rural development. This is mostly due to absence of ‘role clarity’ with regard to the statutory functions assigned to them. Some of the functions listed in the structure for the PRIs do not qualify to be specific activities or responsibilities. The author also felt that the state legislators as well as senior bureaucrats seemed to be not favourably disposed to the elected PRIs. He opined that in several states many functions statutorily listed for the PRIs were being planned and implemented by the line departments of the state governments. These departments receive the funds directly from the state government which are also spent by them. PRIs are not directly involved in the planning and implementation nor are the line department officials made accountable to them. State Governments have launched state-specific innovative schemes/programmes which encroach upon the legitimate functional domain of the panchayats and thus further constrained the spheres of their activity.

Bandyopadhyay D, Sila K. Ghosh, Buddhadeb Ghosh (2003) tried to analyse the historically roots of the basic contradictions which haunted the rural self-governing institutions of India. The authors noticed that the tendency of the ruling classes has been to control in various ways the potentially explosive countryside through shades of local democracy without reforming the bureaucratic framework of local governance. They feel that even after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment things have not changed radically, because the same historically powerful forces are
still in operation. They are out to deprive the panchayats the autonomous that has constitutionally been bestowed to them. They have denied the panchayats the three Fs' – functions, finance and functionaries. As a result, the panchayats have largely remained ineffective. People's participation in them has not gone beyond the formalism of voting. These contradictions have been further sharpened by the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.

Sharn S.V. (2004) opines that the Gram Panchayati can function effectively only if it has full support of Gram Sabha and the Gram Sabha can give such support when it itself is strong. The author analyzed the experience of working of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat in last ten years. He opines that there is a lot of disappointment and frustration, verging on cynicism that nothing has changed and nothing would ever change. The author feels that Gram Sabha meeting in a multi group village is not likely to be attended by a majority of women, wage-earners from among the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and the old and handicapped from the different communities. What happens in the case of Gram Sabha meeting may in all probability also happen in the case of a gram panchayat meeting. The meetings are adjourned for want of quorum in most of the states. As the Gram Sabha recommendations are suggestions, and there is no legal obligation on the Gram Panchayat to accept the recommendations, the author feels that, to be effective, the Gram Sabha needs minimum of essential powers and functions in every state.

Mahi Pal (2004) examined the efforts made by the Centre and the State Governments for strengthening of the Panchayati Raj Institutions since independence and suggested future agenda for their further development. He concluded that the Panchayati Raj as a system of local governance had a weak foundation because the concept of Village Swaraj visualized by the Father of the Nation has not been put into practice. The Central and the State governments, instead of initiating such policies which could strengthen the Panchayati Raj System, have used these institutions as conduits for distributing funds to the target groups.
Ranbir Singh (2004) analyzed the experience of the working of the PRIs in various states during the last decade. The author opined that very few states had transferred all the powers given in the Eleventh Schedule to the PRIs. Even the powers that have been transferred, in reality, continue to be exercise by the functionaries under the control of the state governments. He feels that the recommendation of the State Finance commissions has also not been fully implemented in most of the states. The PRIs have also not been fully implemented in most of the states. The PRIs have also been reluctant to raise the resources of their own by using the powers of taxation given to them.

The author concluded that there has been a general tendency to blame the political leaders and the bureaucracy for the lack of empowerment of the PRIs. They have certainly been responsible for it to some extent for this dismal situation. The author suggested that it should be obligatory for the state government to accept the recommendations of the State Finance Commissions within six months of the submission of their reports. He also suggested that the distribution of the resources among the centre, states and PRIs should be made on the recommendations of the Finance Commission appointed by the president of India Instead of leaving it for the State Finance Commission to recommend the distribution of the resources between the states and the PRIs.

Kunj Bihari Nayak (2008) critically analyzed the system of Panchayati Raj in India on the basis of reviewing mainly secondary literature. This study made a following conclusion. On the one side, the new system after 73\textsuperscript{rd} amendment to Indian Constitution has been glorified by some scientists, administrators, local elite and the well of the sections of our country – as being successful in the bringing about actual decentralisation of power and as an attempt to improve the living standards of women, the SCs, STs and other vulnerable sections in the country. While, on the other side, there are critiques who charge that the system has generated and sustained a number of problems in the rural society. Firstly, many elected women leaders seem to be like puppets dancing to the tune of their dominant male masters. The elected women leaders have not been fully free to exercise their duties in their PRIs. Secondly, in
many places, the elected ignorant dalit and adivasi leaders have either continued to be influenced by the dominant leaders of mainstream society or they have been threatened to withdraw from their positions. Thirdly, the reservation of seats for women, Dalits and Adivasis has often generated discontent among upper caste/class sections that have systematically and strategically created a space for conflict and violence in the rural society. Fourthly, due to lack of sufficient financial support system, often elected leaders of PRIs feel discouraged to spend money from their own packet for carrying on their official activities. Fifthly, due to lack of will of the states to devolve their powers and functions to the PRIs and also the non-cooperative nature of Indian bureaucracy, the movement of democratic decentralization is moving towards nowhere. However, the author feels that the elected leaders can be truly empowered to work effectively only when proper legal and administrative training, sufficient financial support and cooperation of the bureaucracy are ensured.

Devendra Babu. M. (2009), analysed Fiscal Empowerment of Panchayats In India based on the secondary sources of information. It reveals that the panchayats have very little fiscal autonomy. The share of own revenue of PRIs in their total revenues was around six percent only. The dependency level is very high. The foremost factor for this trend is that the PRIs are given the slowest growing revenue sources. This calls for devolution of significant tax sources to them. If this is not tenable for some economic reasons, then a fixed share in the state’s total revenues are to be given to the PRIs. The locally raised revenues are very negligible. The funds flow from higher level governments is very low and lack any devolution design or principles. The transfers are made at the convenience and mercy of such governments. Some of the first SFCs (Karnataka and West Bengal) recommended fixed share from the states’ own total revenues to PRIs and in states such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu, apart from recommending sharing of specific state taxes with the PRIs, also recommended a fixed share from the state’s total own revenues. The author felt that instead of following this kind of dual method of sharing individual taxes and also a share from the total revenues of the state it is appropriate for all the concerned to go for a fixed share method. The SFCs must strive for this kind of resource distribution between the state and the local governments. The experience
shows that the states are not bothered to take action on the SFC reports. This is against the spirit of Constitutional provision.

**Andhra Pradesh:**

Mahi Pal (1995) felt that the state of Andhra Pradesh has provided for a Gram Sabha only because it has been made mandatory for the State Governments in the 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment. Andhra Pradesh is the state where the institution has been given no power (to identify beneficiaries for various poverty alleviation programmes, propose an annual plan, discuss the budget and audit reports and review progress) in spite of it being the base of the PR system of the Gram Panchayat. Whereas in Punjab and Haryana for the Gram Sabha has authorized to approve and sanction the reports and proposals of the Gram Panchayat. The Bihar Act has even provided for vigilance committee to be formed by members of the GS to monitor the working of Gram Panchayat, which is its executive body.

Jain S.P (2002) felt that the structure of Panchayati Raj in Andhra Pradesh had undergone several changes during the last four decades of its existence. Though the system was originally conceived as an institutional framework for planning and implementation of development programmes and also as an administrative set up for delivery of services at lower levels, the entire growth process was inhabited by too much party politics and favouritism coupled with democratic apathy.

Out of the 29 subjects which are supposed to be transferred to PRIs only 17 subjects have been transferred. He noticed that the state Government has not accepted the major recommendations of the SFC. On the whole the State Finance Commission made 84 recommendations while 11 recommendations were accepted with some modifications, 19 were not accepted at all. The author concluded that systems of Panchayati Raj in the state have the necessary potential to transform the rural areas.

Gopinath Reddy M (2003) stated that even post 73rd Amendment the process of devolution in Andhra Pradesh was not satisfactory. As per APPR 1994 Act, the PRIs have to perform the numerous functions enlisted in the Act, the extent of
devolution required should be adequate. Coming to the actual devolution that has taken place, it needs to be stated that the ground reality in Andhra Pradesh is not satisfactory. The various development departments are to be brought under the control of PR bodies for enabling them to discharge functions enshrined in the 11th schedule (29 items) as well as to become institutions of self government. The ground reality existing in the Andhra Pradesh state is that a majority of the line departments have not been brought under the control of PR bodies. A separate Panchayati Raj cadre has not been created. In the case of transfer of functions, the state government has decided to transfer 16 out of 29 subjects to the PRIs. In respect of sixteen (16) subjects of which five (05) subjects are with funds and two (02) subjects are with functionaries, still a large number of subjects mentioned in schedule I and three subjects under schedule II of the Act have not been devolved to the PRIs so far. Only some residuary powers have been entrusted and as such the question of planning by decentralise bodies does not arise. The entire picture of local bodies will undergo drastic change for the very reason that the devolution of finances also will have to follow. However, in Andhra Pradesh the identification of the programmes / functions to be transferred to local bodies has not been finalized.

In the case of financial devolution, the income of ZPs (Zilla Parishads) and MPs (Mandal Parishds) originate mainly from the grants. The contribution of non-tax revenue sources is either zero or negligible. These two tires do get some resources from assigned tax revenues such as land cess, surcharge on stamp duty mineral cess etc. Mandal Parishads depend predominately on grants from the state government. Which are mostly tied in nature. Another feature is also observed that mandal level finances of which MPs have to deposit 15 per cent of their grant exclusively for the purpose of housing programmes implemented by the state Housing Corporation. In respect of Gram Panchayats, the sources of finance are more diversified and are large in number. Gram Panchayats derive their incomes from grants, tax and non - tax sources and property and people's contribution and so on. They also overwhelmingly depend on government grants. According to the First SFC recommended total (39.24 per cent of the state revenue) includes both central and state grants. As per the Action taken Report of the SFC, the grant exclusively given by the state government to the
local bodies is 11.9 per cent of the state revenue. Out of an additional devolution of Rs. 979.16 crores recommended by the State Finance Commission for devolution to Panchayati Raj and Municipal bodies, government accepted for devolution to an extent of Rs. 432.42 Crores, mainly relating to doubling the per capita grants, increase of R.W.S. Grants (Rural water supply) rural sanitation, grants for construction of school buildings, construction of rural roads etc.

Anil Kumar Vaddiraju and Shagum Mehrotra (2004) paper was on the experience of Panchayat Resource Centre (PRC) in mobilizing the Gram Sabhas in the four Villages in Andhra Pradesh. The main activities of the PRC included information dissemination on PRIs, capacity building of elected representatives, Gram Sabha mobilization, micro planning support, and networking of dalit and women representatives. The important methods used were wall writings about the significance of the Gram Sabha, folk theatres and songs, distribution of pamphlets on Gram sabha and individual communication with the sarpanches and ward members. The study brought out that who attended the Gram Sabha meetings did so not to discuss the issues of development but to receive coupons for ration cards. Those who did not attend the meetings said that as the village secretary was never present in the meetings, their problems remained unattended. They have therefore lack interest. One ward member argued that they did not encourage the people to attend because they would not be able to meet the demands of the people. The study stressed the need for work on both sides of the equation to make the sarpanch accountable and to make people aware of their rights and duties.

Gopinath Reddy. M and Sreedevi N. (2004) pointed out the reasons for the meager and inadequate income of the GPs. They feel that most of the Gram Panchayats are not levying the taxes in their domain affecting the other tiers of PRIs as well. The response of the resource starved states to the recommendations of the SFCs is a disappointment to the lower tier governments. The state government also should enable GPs to strengthen their financial position. The reliance of Zilla Parishads and Mandal Parishads on state grants is too large and they receive more of tied grants, which restrict their autonomy. The extent of fiscal decentralisation
through empowerment of the PRIs has been very little. The fiscal capacity of the PRIs even at their present level of functional responsibility is poor. In fact, fiscal restructuring and financial resources are necessary to enable the panchayats to function as viable local self-government institutions.

Prabhakar Reddy (2004) identified twelve reasons which made the panchayats in Andhra Pradesh weak and powerless. The author concluded that, in order to rejuvenate panchayats we need to devolve powers and resources to them with immediate effect. The state government needs commitment and political will to devolve powers and finances immediately. Given the fragile situation of the panchayats it is essential that we have to develop the capacities of elected representatives with a focus on dalits, women, tribals and minorities. However, without political commitment, the PRIs cannot become true local self-governing institutions.

Gopinath Reddy, M and Madhusudan Bandi (2006) conclude that the institution of gram sabha—a direct variant of participatory and sustentative democracy and its working in the Andhra Pradesh state is far from satisfactory. The institution of gram sabha has not yet developed into genuine institution of social Audit and Public accountability. The attitude of ruling elites from the top and even at the level of village presidents is quite hostile to it. Hardly any faith, by the leaders in these institutions as reflecting community will and aspirations has been exhibited. Until legislative backing is ensured by the state government, as has been done in Karnataka, in the form of bringing an amendment to make gram sabha a mandatory institution to be taken into confidence for all the major decisions concerning village life, a real people centered rural development will not usher in.

Haragopal, G and Sudarshanam (2007) narrated various attempts (including the introduction of APPR, Act 1994,) made to empower the grass-roots institutions in Andhra Pradesh. All these attempts did not meet with the success. Although it would be unfair to say that they were a total failure, the experience has been mixed bag. The authors noticed some encouraging trends representing the brighter side but there are
also trends, which are darker and depressing. The encouraging trends include: (i) greater mass consciousness, (ii) shift in power relationships, (iii) infrastructural development. The darker side includes: (i) the continued stubbornness of the social and economic structure, (ii) proliferation of parallel institutions, (iii) the centralized nature of state power and (iv) increasing presence and raise of instruments of coercive power of the state. The authors felt that in Andhra Pradesh only a few instances were symptomatic of the growing crisis in the rural areas. As the state has come to depend more and more coercive instruments, power is shifting from the developmental and democratic institutions to coercive organs of the state power, which are located completely outside the state. The need of the hour is to implement broader structural changes in the society.

Balaramulu C.H. and Ravinder D. (2008) examined the functioning of Gram Sabha and Village Secretariat in Andhra Pradesh. According to them Gram Panchayat is the basic unit of rural governance. However, in practice, Gram Panchayat has no adequate powers, functionaries and finances to bring overall development of the village. The state, instead of devolving more powers and finances to the Gram Panchayat, is creating parallel institutions which are weakening the Gram Panchayat and also violating the very purpose of creation of democratic institutions. Whatever schemes are launched in the village are imposed by the line departments of the state government and involvement of the Gram Panchayat is only to supervise or endorse the work done in the village. The Sarpanch or Gram Panchayat has no powers to control the line officials working at the village level. At the same time the meetings of Gram Sabhas are ignorant of their powers.

Assam:

Sujiata D. Hazari (2006) made a detailed study on political participation of women in local self governance in Assam after 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The study shows that women are not only hesitant and often discouraged, but they also exhibit a certain degree of political indifference along with lack of sustained awareness. It is only the case of reserved seat that a woman is seen to come forward, very often coaxed or pushed by either Husband/ Father or as seen in certain places by her entire family or community.
The authors conclude that inspite of the widely held conviction of the evaluated social status of women in Assam, in reality their plight is only marginally better than their counterparts in other places of India. The primary reasons are poverty, illiteracy, entrenched customs and traditions. In order for woman to break this barrier and come out into the open to freely voice and participate in the political arena, one would need to exert immense mental and physical strength. This strength can be achieved only when economic status improves with education and awareness regarding problems and their solutions. Education at this point appears to be the only solution to break the shackles of archaic beliefs and tradition, gender bias, superstitions etc.

Goa:

Aureliano Fernandes (2008) stated that the Panchayati Raj System had failed to empower the villages as self-sustaining units and to inject social and economic transformation. The author felt that 73rd amendment no doubt laid the foundation for empowering representatives and local communities, but due to federal constraints, it was not able to breakthrough the states intransigence not to devolve powers to the grassroots. Although the GPRA was passed in 1994, ten yearn after GPRA the status of PRIs in Goa remained substantially unchanged. There is failure of operation as well as administrative devolution. The state governments (both the Congress and the BJP) have failed to devolve even a single power of the 29 subjects that have been allocated to panchayats in the Schedule XI. Similarly, none of the 25 powers have been devolved to the Zilla Parishads.

This is mainly due to the perception of state by the ruling elite, and the state bureaucracy that they alone know best, what is good for the state. They refuse to put faith in the capabilities of rural communities to better understand and solve their problems and their ability to decide on issues and problems that confront and concern them. The author concluded that the fundamental cause for the failure of panchayats in Goa is failure to empower elected representatives, including women, and non-devolution of powers by the state government.
Haryana:

Mahi Pal (1994) discussed the provisions of Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 and made some comments on the centralized tendencies of the Act. He opined that the leadership at grassroots level could not be strengthened by providing major role to the centralized bureaucracy of PRIs in Haryana.

He felt that the institutions are not able to function effectively. This is due to lack of political will on the part of state level leaders to transfer power to the people. The past experience shows that in place of people's raj deputy commissioners' raj prevailed in the state. The latest Panchayati Raj Act also has a number of provisions giving control of panchayats to the bureaucracy and the state government. Therefore in order to make panchayats institution of self government and meaningful institutions for enlisting people's participation, the leadership at the grassroots level has to be strengthened. One possible way to achieve this goal is reduce economic inequality in the distribution of land and assets in the rural economy of Haryana. The reservation for weaker sections can only be effective if land and assets are given to them. The experiences of Haryana reveal that even though in some panchayats SCs have concerned sarpanchship, the real power of sarpanch ship has remained in the hands of dominant castes.

Rishi Pal (2002) has conducted a study on the Finances of PRIs in Haryana with the objectives of analyzing the devolution of powers to Panchayats in Haryana. The study is mainly based on secondary data collected from different sources. However, some information on income and expenditure has also been collected from Kurukshetra, Karnal, Kaithal and Jind Zila Parishads.

The findings of the study, among others, include: the only source of income on which Panchayats are depending in the income from Shamlat land; trend of grant-in-aid and other sources are just nominal and grants are not being increased on yearly basis; the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 does not empower PRIs to mobilise adequate resources. Even some of the taxes and cess levied earlier have been
abolished; declining trend of own revenue. Based on the findings, the study suggests that there is need to give clear-cut powers to the Panchayats in order to enable them to impose taxes and fees at their level besides restructuring the administrative set-up of the Panchayati Raj System and proper maintenance of the common property resources.

Ranbir Singh (2008) in his study of PR in Haryana notice that the Gram Panchayat has been given far more powers than the Panchayati Samiti and Zilla Parishad. As a result, the panchayati raj system has become sarpanch centric. The author suggests that there should be a balanced distribution of power between the three bodies. Besides, a clear cut demarcation of their functions also needs to be done. He concluded that the highly centralized and bureaucratized administrative system can be democratized only through genuine democratic decentralization.

Mahi Pal (2009) observed that the meetings of the Gram Sabhas were general in nature and no quorum is required for them as per the Haryana Panchayati Raj Act, but it is interesting to note that at least 10 per cent quorum has been maintained in all the meetings held in the district. It also shows that quorum in all Gram Sabhas was maintained across the blocks. It was desirable that all members of the Gram Panchayat should have been present in the meetings. However, presence of more than 50 per cent of the members of Gram Panchayat in these meetings is positive development in itself, in view of the fact that neither the members of Gram Panchayat are keen to attend these meetings nor is the sarpanch interested in inviting the members to the meetings.

The author concluded that certainty, continuity and strength to be imparted to the institution of Gram Sabha for making panchayati Raj the people’s Raj in the real sense of the term. The efforts made by the District Administration towards this have really been commendable and should serve as beacon point and positive lessons for others. By holding the meetings of Gram Sabha and really making them problem-solving bodies did, indeed, bring a fresh breeze in rural terrain of Sirsa district. The
process which has been started might be sustained by institutionalizing it in attitudes and the work-culture of the elected representatives and officials at the district and sub-district level.

**Himachal Pradesh:**

Shiv Raj Singh and L.N. Sharma (2002) made a detailed study on the implementation of Recommendations of the First State Finance Commission of Himachal Pradesh. The authors noticed that the state government accepted the report of the SFC which made important recommendations to improve the financial health of the PRIs in the state and devolved lot of funds recommendations but nothing much could be expected from the fund starved state government. Representatives of the PRIs are dissatisfied with the devolution of powers and funds in the state and believe that the state government has failed to implement the recommendations of the SFC. Flow of funds to PRIs has certainly improved, with the recommendations of the SFC but the state government can not be expected to meet the ever growing financial requirements of the PRIs. The authors feel that recommendations of the first ever SFC are quite objective, important and relevant to improve the financial position of the PRIs in the state. But these institutions can not emerge as financially viable entities until they generate their own resources, for which all the necessary powers at all levels must be given to these institutions without any further delay. The author concluded that the constitutional initiative to constitute the SFC was a step in the right direction to improve the financial health of the PRIs, provided state governments accept and implement all the recommendations of their respective Finance Commissions. At the same time, these local institutions will have to generate their own resources to emerge as financially viable institutions. The objective of strengthening the democratic process at the grassroots level can be achieved only if the local bodies become economically self-reliant.

Charanjevi Singh, R.K. Sharma and Puja Sharma (2007) evaluated the perceptions and attitudes of male representatives of the PRIs. The authors opined that with the advent of 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, the women once oppressed
and neglected in the society, got an opportunity to stand on an equal platform of sharing decision-making and authority with men. The study shows that the large segment of male representative have opined that reservation given to women in PRIs, in the state of Himachal Pradesh through the HPPR Act, 1994 has provided a platform to women to express their views and participate in the local affairs where as a little less than a large segment of male representatives is of the view that reservation has enhanced the self-esteem and social prestige of women significantly and also enabled them to take up the role of leaders in local bodies. Regarding the level of awareness of the women representatives, the male representatives are of the opinion that the women leaders in the PRI are aware of the problems and concerns of the community though they are not aware of the powers and duties of the PRIs representatives given in the HPPR Act, 1994, to the same extent. While judging the performance of the women representatives as leaders in PRIs, the responses of male representatives strongly indicated that women representatives proved themselves as leaders by acting independently and without any hesitation in the matters relating to PRIs. However, male representatives who are less educated and belonging to low-income group are of the opinion that women leaders are unable to act independently due to gender basis against them. Majority of male representatives strongly agreed to view that success of the PRIs depends on the coordination between the male representatives and women representatives and their working together is essential for the development of their area. They also felt that spreading education and inculcating confidence through training and orientations among women will help in improving participation of women leaders in PRIs.

Kerala:

Biju M.R (1998) in his book entitled “Dynamics of New Panchayati Raj system” discussed historical growth of PR in India and analysed present structure, powers, finance and personnel system in Kerala. He also explained people’s participation in rural development and panchayati Raj in Kerala State. He attributed the success of local government units to the enlightened public.
John Oommen (1999) conducted a study on two panchayats in Kerala. The study has shown that the people are in favour of expanding the role of the Gram Sabhas. They want the Gram Sabhas to give the final seal of approval to the activities of the Gram Panchayat. The people interviewed, have suggested that the Gram Sabha will perform its duties in time provided people are made aware of its role in developmental activities. Once their felt needs are taken into consideration, they will automatically attend the meetings in large numbers and participate effectively in the activities of the Gram Panchayats.

Moolakkattu Stephen John and Jos Chathukulam (2006) made a comprehensive study on experience of Panchayati Raj in Kerala. The authors stated that a decade of reforms in Panchayat Raj in Kerala had led to mixed results. In terms of assured flow of funds, as well as its adequacy in relative terms, Kerala has made impressive gains. Same could be said of the social infrastructural sectors. The authors concluded that Kerala panchayati raj system was a strong case for service delivery model. They felt that the village panchayats had become sites of local welfare and effective service delivery and many poor people then frequently went to the panchayat office for pensions and other benefits.

Thomas. E.M. (2006) analyzed the decentralized planning in Kerala. The author felt that the rate of participation of people in gram sabha meetings during the ten years period showed a mixed trend. In the initial years of people's planning, Government of Kerala gave much importance to generating an awareness among people about the importance of people's participation in the planning process. Development seminars are characterized by a steady decline in the participation of people. Task forces or working group members and experts are still actively participating in the planning process. But the performance of beneficiary committees fails to show green signal, even though there are a few wonderful success stories in this regard in Nattika Panchayat. The completion of projects with voluntary contribution of people still remains a lofty dream. Even though decentralized planning in Kerala could not moblise the expected levels of people's participation, the
very existence and perpetuation of the various institutions of decentralized planning is a positive signal.

Abdul Samad. M. (2007) examined the various aspects that played favorably and unfavourably in electing these women and exercising their powers as members of PRIs in Kerala. The author strongly argued that women in Kerala have no unfavourable elements which mar her entry into politics. Kerala has becomes a model to others in gender justice and hundreds of women in Kerala has attained political empowerment through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act.

In his study the author found that more than 70 per cent of elected women to PRIs in 1995 had no experience in political activities. The number of experienced women has increased by 11 per cent in 2000 election. This is a significant change compared to the first election (1995) when the vast majority of those who contested had neither political nor social activity of any kind.

According to the author it was the reservation that played as the most important favourable factor that led to the empowerment of women in Kerala, and suggested that, the political parties should encourage women in large numbers and various assignments should be given to them so as acquire leadership qualities.

Karnataka:

Devendra Babu (1999) analyzed the performance of PRIs in Karnataka. The author noticed that participation by the panchayat members especially the SC/ST, illiterates and women in decision-making in panchayat meeting was not so active. As per the new Panchayati Raj Act the elected representatives and officials should attend Gram Sabha meeting. In reality, Gram Sabha meetings were not held in majority of Gram Panchayats. The results of concurred evaluation of JRY in Karnataka reveal that only 14 percent of the GPs are discussed the action plan for JRY in the GS meetings. Thus the failure to conduct GSs regularly by panchayats lead to ineffective decisions and implementation of programmes. The author concluded that elected
representatives failed to involve themselves fully in the plan preparations. The Taluka Panchayats entirely depend upon the ZPs for their plan preparations as they lack both planning and accounts personnel.

Madhya Pradesh:

Mishra S.N and Lokesh Kumar and Chaitalipal (1996) discussed the structure and functioning of New PR in Madhya Pradesh and attempted to measure the success and failure of the system on various empirical parameters as Madhya Pradesh was the first state to introduce the new system of PR in the country.

Yatindra Singh Sisodia (2006) focused the Gram Sabha within the Panchayati Raj System in Madhya Pradesh. This study was based on the nature of people's participation in Gram Sabha in Shajapur and Dews Districts. The author pointed out that the households represented in panchayats varied from village to village. The author argued that all the members did not attend Gram Sabha. Usually men attend the Gram Sabha meetings. His study shows that in majority cases, nobody attends the meeting whereas a significant number opined that only men attend the meetings. Despite, having a statutory provision of one third representation of women, mandatory for quorum of gram sabha meeting, a clear-cut apathy is discernible among the households. The authors concluded that participation in Gram Sabha meeting has been low despite the people knowing about the advantages of Gram Swaraj. Low participation can be mainly attributed to the strongly entrenched caste system, class differentiations and gender divide in villages. Sarpanch and other influential people dominate in decision making process. The author felt that the resource flow in gram sabha and its ever increasing power and authority have generated some interest in people. It is expected that this interest is retained, intensified and translated to more broad - based and participative practice at grassroots level.

Orissa:

Pratyusna Patnaik (2005) studied the participation of elected representatives belonging to weaker sections in the functioning of four gram panchayats in Orissa's
Dhenkanal district. The author observed the extent to which numerical representation in the actual exercise of power by these sections. The author found that elected representatives were not able to properly articulate group specific interests or exercise their own judgement in panchayat decision – making. The author concluded that affirmative action in decentralization has not been successful in ensuring “proper and effective representation” of disadvantaged groups. The representatives in a majority of cases were answerable to the elites of the village and remained under their control rather than exhibiting any accountability to citizens at large.

West Bengal:

Ghosh D.K (1999) states that the people’s presence in the meetings of the Gram Sansads is not wide spread. The main reason for low participation, as it is felt, is that the Panchayats are not interested (in most of the cases) in making people interested in Panchayats’ work. In addition to this, the proper respect to the common people is not shown by the panchayats when people approach panchayats for their work. Until and unless the people of the area are involved in day to day work of the panchayats, they will not feel belongingness to panchayats and be interested to attend the occasional meetings like Gram Sansads and Gram Sabhas.

The grass root experience is that even when people attend such meetings they are not allowed to make critical assessment of the activities of the panchayats. But participation means sharing and being enriched through mutual interaction. It is desirable that in the public meetings like Gram Sansads and Gram Sabhas, the political leaders and officials should talk less and listen more from the people. This will help to remove the mental block within the common masses and will enable them to come forward for participation.

Maitreesh Ghatak and Maitreya Ghatak (2002) made a comprehensive study on the functioning of Gram Sansad in 20 villages of West Bengal and brought out certain important issues. The study shows that the largest single category was agricultural labourers followed by farmers with less than two acres of land. Those
with more lands or had non-farming sources of income constituted about 16 per cent of those present. The analysis of the findings of the study tends to show that the meetings were centered around very practical and concrete problems with the village or cluster of villages: proposals for road repair, where should a tube well be installed, who should receive loans as opposed to broader issues which political parties, trade unions or peasant organizations in West Bengal are concerned with, such as, economic liberalization, privatisation of public sector. In quite a few meetings, the accounts of the previous year and the budgets for the next year for the entire Gram Sansad area were also placed. The researchers have noticed that the participants actively voice demands for new projects, suggest how allocated funds should be spent and debate how projects should be designed. The pradhans and the local representatives are not spared. They have to answer lot of questions and often face allegations about the misuse of funds and selection of beneficiaries. The responses of the panchayat leaders to the criticisms indicate that they could not take the voters present in the meetings for granted. There had been occasions when they had to make frank admission about their errors.

Tamil Nadu:

Bharati Pratima Acharya and Ramesh Chandra Panda (2002) analyzed some issues related to Panchayatis in Tamil Nadu. The authors felt that Functional and Financial devolutions to three-tier panchayats along with administrative delegations indicated that the state was set to take excellent leap forward in rural development and poverty alleviation. According to authors initiatives taken to empower gram sabhas and village panchayats have been appropriate. Financial devolution and taxation powers of village panchayat provide good opportunity for financial viability to the Panchayati Raj institutions. The authors suggested that the need for capacity building of elected representatives and panchayat officials, barriers created by bureaucrats, growing reluctance to delegate powers and transfer schemes and officials to PRIs, development of parallel organizations, and lack of organic linkage among three-tire panchayats.
Baluchamy.S (2004) feels that after the enactment of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment and the subsequent state legislations, a great deal of prominence have been given to the Gram Sabha, the Panchayati Raj institutions that had become most defunct and concerted efforts have been made to revive it. However, the results do not reflect the prominence allowed or the efforts put in. The main conclusion derived from this study is that participatory democracy will come a reality under the Panchayati Raj system only if the people really and actively participate in the affairs and activities of panchayat. The mechanism which facilitates community participation is the Gram Sabha. So strengthening and widening the functioning of the Gram Sabha is the best means of ensuring community participation. Only when the people, in their role as Gram Sabha members, participate actively in the development process will participatory democracy become a reality and the Panchayati Raj will become a system of the people, by the people and for the people.

Union Territories:

Jacob John and Ruchi Jain (2008) opined that even after more than a decade of the passage of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Union Territories (UTs) without a legislature have been grappling with many complex problems like structural, administrative and fiscal. This study has been found that four UTs (Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli Lakshadweep Islands) have devolved few subjects and activities to PRIs while there has been no devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to PRIs in Chandigarh. It seems that PRIs will cease to exist in these UTs. Activity mapping, which is the key level issue, has also not been done. The study reveals that though UT administrations of all the five UT’s have specified that functions be transferred to the PRIs, the orders of the administration are not being executed in its true letter and spirit.

In the absence of a legislature, the UT administrator and the bureaucracy have been holding powers. A huge amount of funds available with PRIs remain unspent
every year is primarily due to the lack of functions and functionaries. Significantly, the accumulated unspent balance with the PRIs, has had an adverse effect on mobilization of own source of revenue. The authors suggested that certain concrete steps were essential to improve fund mobilization and utilization by the PRI system in the five UT’s. Own source of revenue needs to be mobilized by strengthening tax assessment and collection process. The authors concluded that the urgency for the removal of mismatch between activity mapping and corresponding funding of PRIs under various budget heads of UTs.

Biswa S.K (2010) felt that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration have failed to devolute powers to PRIs. The three tier panchayat institutions in the Islands administration was unable to effectively assign the responsibilities, with matching funds and staff to the representative bodies. When the public representatives and local members of parliament had repeatedly given strong representations to the Union Government regarding devolution of funds, functions and functionaries to these Islands local bodies, the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India in December 2002, ultimately issued necessary orders to the UT’s administration for transferring the functions and other assets to the respective PRIs. In that orders only five subjects were transferred. But everything was done on paper and not in practice. Once again the public representatives agitated which resulted in transfer of six subjects with funds, functions and functionaries in 2006. Even then, most of the staff has been diverted from parents departments having link with their respective departments. Moreover, due to shortage of staff, more then one panchayat’s work is looking after by the same worker. There is confusion regarding working jurisdiction among staff at the three tires. All the three tires have been assigning their areas of jurisdiction regarding execution of works and responsibilities separately. It has been observed that the nature of work of all the three tires bodies is the same. The author concluded that the Andaman and Nicobar Island Administration failed to devolution of power to PRIs after the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, because the bureaucrats are not ready to implement the Constitutional Provision in practice.
Comparative Studies:

Raghavulu C.V and Narayana E.A (1999) pointed out that political neglect is considered to be an important reason for the dominancy on Panchayati Raj Institutions. The respective state governments had not transferred substantial authority to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The state level authorities were neither prepared to part with their powers nor confident that the locally elected bodies could carryout their designated functions effectively. This is reflected in the half hearted devolution of powers and the retention of light control over the devolved functions. The results have been to restrict the autonomy of the local bodies and introduce checks and balances at all levels.

The authors concluded that the transfer of adequate resources to PRIs has been an unreserved issue, except in Karnataka. Since the number of functions transferred to PRIs has been on the increase, the gap between resources and responsibilities has been widening. The establishment of Panchayati Raj Finance Commission, on the lines of Karnataka, would help in solving the problem to some extent. Other long-term measures, like enlarged tax jurisdiction, sharing of proceeds from select state taxes and grants could be supplemented. The mechanism of matching grants might be considered to encourage PRIs to fully tap their own existing tax base.

Narayana,D (2003) felt that with the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments local governments have acquired constitution sanction and the reservations have brought many women and disadvantaged groups into the political process. This is an opportunity for all to try and evolve new structure of governance. However, a necessary condition for the transforming of panchayats into local governments is devolution of powers, resources and functions to them and capacity building among the elected representatives. The author analysed the functioning of the elected representatives at the gram panchayat level in Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. The author found that the perception of powers and responsibilities of the elected members showed poor awareness in Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. In
Madhya Pradesh local governments are looked as mere implementers of the schemes/programmes of higher governments and Tamil Nadu they are merely intermediaries. Only in Kerala the local government status of panchayats is well understood. Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, Panchayats are perceived as agents of state governments, whereas in Kerala they are taken as local governments. In all three states, Panchayat presidents understand the legislation is better but planning for development is a far cry as little effort seems to have gone into capacity building and devolution of powers and resources. The author concluded that unless larger powers and resource are devolved and elected representatives are trained, local government will be a dream.

Mahi Pal (2004) rightly says that before listing the functions to be performed by the panchayats, the states have introduced certain qualifying clauses. In Andhra Pradesh, Haryana and Tamil Nadu, it is “within the limit of its funds”. In Punjab, it is “to the extent its funds allow to perform”, and in Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, it is “as far as the gram panchayat funds at its disposal”. This limitation naturally affected the expected role of panchayats.

Malik A.S. (2005) analysed working of panchayats after 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act based on secondary data. The author felt that the provisions i.e., three tier system, Term wise elections and Reservations helped in conferring uniformity in the structure of gram panchayats at village level.

Further, the Gram Sabha meetings were made mandatory and this institution was endowed with policy making powers. It is an innovative device in ensuring people participation, but this has not been fully utilised in the country mainly due to the caste consciousness and factionalism. Another important factor obstructing Gram Sabha to become an institution of conscious and active people participation is that the Gram Panchayat does not decide the things related to the development or welfare of village people, rather it is decided by the funding agency who pays for the development or welfare. The Gram Sabha meetings merely approve it.
The information in the available data illustrates that there exists a wide variation in the matter of devolution of functions and functionaries to the different levels of panchayats in the Country. It is also evident that while the states like Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Sikkim fare well in terms of devolution of functions and to some extent funds, most others have not transferred the required staff to the PRIs to carry out their additional functional responsibilities. The essence of local government lies in the freedom, they enjoy in selecting their own course of development, independent planning and discretion in hiring and firing of their own staff under their own conditions of service. But that does not exist in reality not even to be said as satisfactory. It is observed that while expenditure responsibilities of local bodies are extensively enhanced; (but) there is no law to ensure a corresponding assignment of funds to match the additional responsibilities assigned to these institutions.

The author suggests that there is an urgent need of sincerity on the part of the polity to devolve the powers to the gram panchayats so that they can be established as the real local self government in the Country.

Sodhi J. S. and Ramanujam M. S. (2006) examined the working of Panchayati Raj Systems in Five States (i.e., Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and West Bengal). The authors highlighted issues and made specific recommendations on issues related to, Gram Sabha elections, devolution of functionaries, devolution of finances, planning implementation, parallel bodies, empowerment of women, capacity building, and training and social audit and litigation. The authors feel that the constitutional directives on Panchayati Raj System (PRS) institutions are clear. The state Panchayati Raj Acts which followed, as a mandatory requirement, are not clear and comprehensive. Functional and financial delegations to Panchayati Raj System institutions have been inadequate and half hearted. The style and content of the delegations have systematically weakened the effectiveness of PRS institutions in many states. It gives the impression that the state governments have no politico-administrative will to strengthen the panchayats. Bureaucracy in many states, except Karnataka, is also not favourably disposed to the
idea of decentralisation. They have safeguarded their own interests by reserving the right to intervene through adequate provisions in the state Panchayat Acts in the functioning of Panchayati Raj System institutions. Too much is being expected from the elected representatives who are mostly poor, ignorant and illiterate, generally at Gram Panchayat and Panchayati Samiti levels. The contributions of elected representative to Panchayati Raj System institutions are negligible, but the expenditure on maintaining these elected representatives has been prohibitive and hindering development.

People's participation has also been far from satisfactory. Gram sabhas are generally inactive. Elected representatives also have not been taking any interest in panchayat activities at Gram Panchayat and Panchayati Samiti levels. In a large majority of cases, Gram Panchayat meetings are held only on paper. Karnataka has been exceptional in this regard. The government functionaries working at all the three tiers of the PRS are posted by the respective state governments. There are also incidents reported that the panchayat secretaries, government functionaries at the Gram Panchayat level, are in some states those who are declared surplus in their parent departments in the government and are, therefore, posted to work in the Gram Panchayats. Such persons are not motivated enough to perform the tasks assigned to them.

Timothy Besley, Rohini Pande, Vijayendra Rao (2007) made a detailed study on the political economy of Indian gram panchayats in four states in South India. The study is based on a household and village survey covering 522 villages in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The authors examined the functioning of the panchayat system mandated by the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution. The authors found that gram Panchayats, created by this massive experiment in democratic decentralization, have had an effect on the delivery of public service.

Bhattacharya K.P (2008) made a comprehensive study on a major impediment in the functioning of the Panchayati Raj in West Bengal and Kerala. The author stated that the functioning of Panchayati Raj system in Kerala was better than West
Bengal, also under a Marxist government. The author noticed that in Kerala, funds were provided directly to Panchayats. The institutions do not depend on the benevolence of the state government. This is a major reason why the Panchayati Raj system has been a successful story in Kerala. In West Bengal, the Left Front members treat the opposition with disdain and contempt. The legislators are not taken into confidence when the state government decides to undertake major projects.

Pratap Ranjan Jena, Manish Gupta (2008), felt that there was no standing national database on panchayat finances in India, which confined any meaningful analysis of the revenue effort of panchayats. Based on a field survey in the four states of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Orissa, this study found that the assigned tax rights are not fully utilised by the panchayats and non-tax revenue is the dominant source of their own revenue. A comparison of own revenues of the panchayati raj institutions for 2005-06, based on the survey results with those reported by the Twelfth Finance Commission for 2002-03, shows a huge difference between the two sets in the case of per capita own tax in Madhya Pradesh and per capita own non-tax in Chhattisgarh. The authors conclude that the evidence of better tax collection in the backward districts reveals the potential of higher own revenues provided the panchayats make an earnest effort to improve the delivery of public services. Improvement in service delivery by the PRIs in their localities will help in participation of people at large and willingness to pay taxes will improve. In this context the evidence collected through the sample survey regarding lack of “willingness to collect” revenues to provide services as revealed by the GPs in their localities needs to be investigated further by taking a “willingness to pay” approach.

Ranbir Singh (2010) conclude that the New System of Panchayati Raj is far away from Gandhi’s vision of Gram Swaraj because the Panchayati Raj Institutions have not been given adequate functions, functionaries and funds in almost all the states except in West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. The MLAs have also been creating hurdles as they view the Panchayati Raj leaders as the perspective rivals. Moreover, the representatives of the remaining states did not put pressure on their Governments to do so. The hostility of the bureaucracy also
prevented the devolution of powers on the Panchayati Raj Institutions. The author suggests that the genuine devolution of powers is directly needed for realizing the Gandhi’s visions of Gram Samaj.

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