The foregoing discussion abundantly proves the indispensability of the role of village communities and the Panchayats in the modern socio-economic development of the country. From the decline of the Hindu regime down to the British rule the village had been the primary unit for revenue and police administration and as a result it lost its fervour as a socio-economic organization of the past. Legislation for setting up village Panchayats existed in most of the States. Since independence, several states revised their earlier enactments with the object of promoting the quicker development of Panchayats and of giving to them a larger role than before. The Planning Commission in the 1st Five Year Plan remarked that in the practical implementation of this principle some states made considerable progress, but in the country as a whole much was to be done. They, therefore, suggested that each state would have a programme for establishing over a period of years Panchayats for villages or groups of villages.

1. 1st. Five Year Plan, PP-132-33.
During the Second Five Year Plan it was observed that the object of the government was to establish a statutory Panchayat in every village, especially in areas selected for national extension and Community Development Projects. During the First Five Year Plan the number of village Panchayats increased from 83,087 to 117,593. According to the tentative programme drawn up for the Second Five Year Plan, by 1960-61 the number of village Panchayats would increase to 244,564. All over India the need to review village boundaries was felt so that there might be evolved good, efficient working village units with live Panchayats.

The National Development council in the month of January, 1958 considered the recommendations of the Study Team set up by the committee on plan projects which was then published - and came to the conclusion that democratic institution at the district, block and village levels would be viewed as parts of one connected structure of development administration within the district. The council, therefore, affirmed the objective of introducing democratic institutions at the district and block levels and suggested that each state should work out the structure which suited its conditions best.

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1. Second Five Year Plan, P-151.
During the Second Five Year plan legislation for the introduction of Panchayati Raj was enacted in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Madras, Mysore, Orissa, Punjab and Rajasthan. In Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and in West Bengal Legislation was also passed by their respective State Legislatures.

Review of the Second Five Year Plan of West Bengal Published in the year 1962 shows that statutory Panchayats called the Gram and Anchal Panchayats are being gradually set up in the rural areas of West Bengal under West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1957. And the number of Gram and Anchal Panchayats set up during the Second Five Year Plan period were 4556 and 714 respectively against the target of 6360 and 1360 respectively. The population covered was 56 lakhs, which is 28% of the rural population of West Bengal. The number of villages covered was 11,601. The amount of government grants paid to the Anchal Panchayats during the period is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958-59</td>
<td>₹1,09,440.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-60</td>
<td>₹795,352.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\text{Total}\] ₹22,01,019

During the Second half of the Third Five Year Plan the establishment of the Panchayat system throughout West Bengal has been complete from the village downward to the district upward in accordance with the recommendations of the Study Team. India is matching forward with the new system of government, the new administrative and development machinery. Thus, in a word, the progress relating to the setting up of Panchayati Raj is quite satisfactory when almost the entire country has come under the purview of the new scheme.

When we take into consideration the prospect of Panchayati Raj we see that prospect of the latter is inextricably linked with the prospect of democracy which we practice today. The future of democracy lies in the progress and development of local self-government when 'the best school of democracy, and the best guarantee for its success is the practice of local self-government.'

But the problem of democratic government is a problem of finding men fit to use its machinery. In local and regional democracy this problem is found to be

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more acute and an insoluble one.

One very serious danger which the Panchayat system faces at its early stage is that the leadership in these bodies very likely slips in the hands of the upper and more prosperous classes in the community, those that have controlled the village hitherto, the landed gentry and the higher-caste people. Here the principal corrective lies in a vigorous implementation of the policy of social justice, of land reforms and of special assistance to the underprivileged sections of the community.

A second danger is that party politics may enter into the local authorities in an ugly shape and tend to divide further the village community. While party politics may be showing some ugly features today it can be hoped that with growing political maturity in the people, spread of education, economic and social progress, the complexion of our party politics will improve.

A third danger which is found to exist is the inefficiency in the administration of the local authorities due to lack of experience of the leaders. The training of the new political leadership of the functionaries of government in their new role can be of much help in this regard.

* A person must possess a number of qualities to be a successful leader of an organisation and these qualities are fully dealt with by Dr. A. Avasthi & Dr. S. Maheshwari in their book on "Public Administration, 1965". (See Page-164).
Another possible danger is of rivalry and tension between the various levels of local authority. To eradicate this evil the emphasis must be laid on the sharing of responsibilities rather than on division of powers among the local authorities.

There is also the danger of corruption entering into the local authorities. The ultimate remedy in this case lies in the sanction of public opinion and the vigilance of the well-informed and public-spirited citizens.

It must be admitted without any reasonable doubt that the greatest imperfection of popular local institutions, and the chief cause of the failure which so often attends them, is the low calibre of the men by whom they are almost carried on. This is the serious lacuna which is found to exist in most of the Panchayats. But it must not be assumed that this cannot be remedied. Only the spread of education and the growing political consciousness of the masses can help the raising of such calibre and the intelligence of persons who would use it.*

3. C. F. "Here too the chief remedy is social education without which no revolutionary change would be possible. No amount of progressive legislation from above would be of any avail in the absence of an energetic and effective campaign of education" (Jyotiprasad Harayan - Swaraj for the People, 1961, P-15).
Democracy preaches social, political and economic equality. So it would be erroneous and at the same time unjust to put always faith in the higher strata of the society and to humiliate the persons of inferior capacity. The capacity or calibre, which ever might be called in, can be developed if proper atmosphere is created. It is not a monopoly to a particular class or a particular community.

True to the socialist tradition and ideology our Panchayat System has put equal emphasis on both the political and economic aspect of human life. It is a truism in political science that political equality is never real unless it is accompanied by virtual economic equality. The future of Panchayati Raj in a word lies in the quantum of progress achieved in social, political and economic spheres of the community. The recent discussions on the problems of Panchayati Raj at Hyderabad Summer School reveal the fact that the success of Panchayati Raj depends on the widespread training and education amongst the members of the Panchayat and the Executive Officers who are attached with the working of Panchayati system. To quote the exact language: 'If Panchayati Raj was to achieve its objectives - namely involving people actively and democratically in their own development

there was a fundamental need for the training and education of members and office-bearers of the Panchayati Raj institutions, of members of Legislatures and Parliament, representatives of voluntary organisations, executive staff in Panchayati Raj institutions and of the rural people in general. A massive adult education movement was desirable to educate the latter section.

Formerly, the Union Board, Local Board and the District Board—these three organs proved their incapacity and ultimately failed as instruments of social and economic welfare in West Bengal. The obvious reasons which were put forward for the virtual failure of the said machineries were, first, lack of autonomy and independence; secondly, too much control by the Central Departments of the government; and lastly; lack of adequate financial resources. With the growth of the Panchayati system and the spirit of 'democratic decentralisation' the autonomy of the local units has increased, control of the State Government over the local units has to some extent slackened (only reasonable interference by the State Departments has been allowed) and, reasonable financial resources to the local units have also been assured. The financial resources of the local units will gradually grow in accordance with

the progress in the social and economic spheres of the country. But the question which naturally emerges whether there would be a proper utilisation of financial resources or not.

To check the improper use of financial resources there should be a growth and feeling for the 'people' which is otherwise known as 'public spiritedness'. Only the growth of 'public spiritedness' and a feeling for common good, common interest and common welfare can help achieve this object of Panchayati Raj. In order to develop these characteristics amongst the people at large there should be that type of education and training amongst the people. Otherwise, the new schemes will also meet the same fate as did the old ones.

With the growth of Panchayati Raj institutions there arose a concept of 'Planning from below'. But in practice it is found in many cases that programmes continued to be drawn up at the Central and State Levels and decisions were arrived at and imposed on local authorities from above. There is a perpetual conflict between the concept and its implementation which is partly responsible for the panchayati Raj institutions continuing to remain inexperienced in planning for local
development except in a limited sense. This is, to a great extent, responsible for the lack of local enthusiasm and participation in the implementation of the schemes. In addition to the facts already analysed, it must be told that the Indian system of local self-government including the urban ones is much controlled and regulated by the executive department of the government which ultimately damages and destroys the enthusiasm and initiative of the people. The British system of local self-government, on the other hand, has admitted the control of the Central Parliament over the local self-governing units in the place of the executive. The latter in doing so has to a great extent recognised the democratic spirit and tradition. The present practice of the theory of 'democratic decentralisation' in India under the banner of Panchayati Raj has definitely increased the independence of the Panchayati Organs but off and on direct control of the executive officials in the place of the Legislature as in Great Britain injects some undemocratic elements. Moreover, the present subordination of some executive officials to the Panchayati organs has led to a violent resentment of the local officials and

1. Ibid, P-19.
It thus resulted in the consequent dislocation of the machineries in some areas. The Executive Officials cannot forget their former powers, status and authority. In a democratic country they should be democratic minded. The success of the Panchayati Raj, in a nutshell, depends upon the whole-hearted cooperation of the Executive officials with the local leaders.

Lastly, the future of the Panchayat—a genuine instrument of rural welfare rests on the economic strength which it attains through the active cooperation of the rural people. It is illogical to assume that the Panchayat should always depend on government grants. The concept of dependence of the Panchayat on Government grants and subsidies for its tasks of rural development would damage the integrity and independence of the Panchayat. Thus the Panchayat must always strive to stand on its own leg. In order to stand on its own leg and to attain independence—free from unnecessary control of the executive and legislative departments of the government—it should rely on its own resources. It must levy all the taxes authorized by the Act and rules enacted by the government and also ensure full realization of the same. Moreover, it must always make attempts to
build remunerative assets of the villages. *Thus* this process alone can give financial relief to the much economically distressed villagers and help the different State Governments solve the serious food problem which India is facing today. In this context the example of Munamarr village Panchayat under Penumantra Panchayati Saniti of the West Godavary district in Andhra Pradesh can be cited. The said Panchayat has not totally depended on outside help. "It levied house tax, profession tax etc. A noteworthy feature of tax imposition is that this Panchayat has imposed a special tax called "Population Tax" and derives a yearly income of Rs.200/-. It has a good record of tax collection, which have been cent per cent since 1958. But the Sarpanch, Mr. Manneswara Rao has realised that taxation alone cannot make the village Panchayat affluent. He To strengthen itself financially, the Panchayat has taken keen interest in creating remunerative assets. It has utilised water resources and introduced fingerlings in tanks and has an annual income of Rs.1,200/- from pisciculture. It has also planted coconut and banana trees on the tank bunds. These yield an income of Rs.1,000/- a year. It raises grass on waste lands and derives an annual income of Rs.450/- through its sale. It has an income of Rs.75/- through sale of lotus leaves. The income of the Panchayat has risen by 300%...
Panchayat takes utmost care to protect trees. By creating remunerative assets of its own the Panchayat is striving to stand on its own legs. The Sarpanch has taken bold steps towards the revision of tax rates."

The future of the Panchayat, in a word, depends on the capacity and intelligence of the people; on the willingness of the people for rural reconstruction and rural development.

Owing to the excessive pressure of population on land in India it would be an unwise and an erroneous step that Panchayats should absolutely depend upon agriculture for its resources. Just as the prospect of Panchayati Raj depends upon the progress achieved in the agricultural field so also its prospect lies in the creation and development of small-scale and cottage industries in the rural regions of West Bengal as well as India. There is much truth in the saying that "Political decentralization cannot be effective without economic decentralization." The object of Panchayati Raj thus should be to create an agro-industrial community. This agro-industrial community would not only process wheat, paddy, fruits, vegetables, sugarcane and cotton produced in its

region but also "manufacture radios, cycle-parts, small-machines, electrical goods, etc. that might be needed in the region. Such development might also narrow down the gap that is widening between City and village and mitigate the evils of urbanization."