CHAPTER TEN

Conclusion
On the recommendations of Balwantrai Mehta Committee, the experiment of PR is going on in most of the states of India since last four decades. Many academicians, politicians and administrators have with great interest debated the role of PR in rural India. To some it is an instrument for the rural development and welfare programmes and for others it is a unit of self government at the local level, to strengthen our democratic polity. It is quite appropriate at present to assess the role and performance of PR in the light of their goal attainment.

In the foregoing chapters the main discussion was carried out at length to analyse the multi dimensional facets of village panchayats in Kerala. An attempt is
made in this chapter to present briefly the major findings of the study and to throw light on the main problems of PR in Kerala with some suggestions which may affect its future prospects. It is divided into three parts. First part deals with the national level scenario, second part deals with situation in Kerala and concluding remarks and future prospects in the last part.

I

MAJOR FINDINGS

National Level Scenario*

1. Historically the legacy of present PR in India is age old. If we go into the historical context of PR, we find that it has been existing in India since the ancient vedic periods. It has passed through many ups and downs throughout Indian history particularly during the periods of the Maurias, the Guptas and the Mughals. The survival of panchayats in different forms, shapes, roles etc. throughout the Indian history have a major and lasting impact on the Indian culture and civilization. Therefore, it has helped the present panchayat structure to be acceptable to Indian society.

*Findings based on chapter 2 "Emergence and Growth of Panchayat Institutions in India" (Pages 29 to 86).
2. Many steps have been taken up to modernise the ancient village panchayat system during the British rule. The establishment of British local fund in 1869, Lord Mayo's resolution of 1870, Lord Rippon's resolution of 1882, enactment of Bombay village panchayat Act 1920 and the passing of 1909, 1919 and 1935 Acts were some of the significant landmarks in this process. The importance of this institution was also felt by the Indian National Congress, which was involved in the struggle for freedom. However, the prevailing political circumstances did not allow it to work as expected.

3. Due to the prevailing circumstances of this time, these institutions were neglected even after independence. Except giving constitutional recognition (in the directive principles of state policy), no serious attempt was made by the central government during the first decade of independence. But the appointment of Balwantrai Mehta committee in 1956 was the first national attempt made by the central government to study the whole problem connected with the community development programme, national extension service, and rural local institutions. On the basis of the recommendations made by Balwantrai Mehta committee for democratic decentralisation, most of the states had enacted legislations of a suitable type in the later half of fifties and early sixties. This process provided nation wide infrastructure for the rural development with a hope to involve rural people in the nation
building activity. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then prime minister coined this infrastructure as panchayati raj.

4. After its inception, PR has passed through four distinct phases – ascendency (1959-64), stagnation (1964-69), decline (1969-83) and revival (1983 onwards). The most significant development during the period of ascendency was the appointment of Balwantrai Mehta Committee. It is in this period that Panchayati Raj Institutions made a very appreciable take off in most of the states of India.

5. Soon PR entered into an era of stagnation (1964-69) and decline (1969-83). No serious attempts were made neither at the centre nor in the states to revitalise the PR structure during these periods. As a form of local government, it has fallen out of favour everywhere except in Maharashtra and Gujarat, where it has recorded some achievements to its credit. The stagnation and decline are the results of four major factors. Firstly, the new national and state level leadership which emerged around 1966 had much thinner links with the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi and thus much weaker ideological commitment to panchayati raj. Secondly, the mounting food shortage of this period and crop failures of 1966-67 led to a reshuffling of priorities in the national planning, resulting in an overriding emphasis on agricultural production. Thirdly, the trend of Indian political system has been
markedly centralised since the mid sixties but the pace towards centralisation of power got considerably accelerated in early 70's. During that period political leadership of state governments, especially run by congress party, was being made subservient to the central government. This exactly was not the climate under which panchayati raj can grow and flourish. Lastly, technology discovered at this time gave birth to green revolution in rural areas. Number of outside agencies and institutions began to compete the PRI's in the rural areas to meet the challenge of rapid agricultural development. This powerful and centralised pressures were responsible for the relegation of PR to a lower, even unimportant status. Appointment of Ashoka Mehta Committee in 1977 during the Janata rule was the only exception during this period. But due to the political change its report was not implemented.

6. At present, PR in India is passing through its last but not less important phase of revival from 1983 onwards. It is in this period that the non-congress governments in Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal made appreciable efforts to rejuvenate the PRI's. Under the prime ministership of Rajiv Gandhi congress as an all India party could not ignore this new trend. In view of the general elections in 1989, sincere and direct attempts were made by the central government to give prominent place to PRI's in the mainstream of Indian politics.
This process led to the appointment of a series of committees and commissions at national level which finally culminated in the introduction of constitution (sixty fourth amendment) bill 1989. Though, a national level political consensus has taken place to revive PR, the concrete steps for passing the amendment in parliament are still awaited. However, this indicates the bright prospects of PR in India, because it will give constitutional safeguards and political backing of national consensus to PR bodies in near future.

Problems and suggestions

Having all these heartening developments in its last phase of revival the problems of PR are not solved finally. The foremost problem of PR is to give it a guarantee for its smooth and constant functioning in rural areas so that it can work at the centre of rural development. It is the duty of central government to provide them the required priorities in its national planning. So that they can acquire their lost position and prestige throughout the country. Barring to few states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, West Bengal, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, most of the states in India are indifferent towards PR. A new Act at the national level regarding PR belongs to the concurrent list of Indian constitution, which do not make obligatory for the states to implement it in letter and spirit. It requires a mechanism of such a kind in the preparation of plans, programmes and projects of the
central government that it can have an indirect influence on the state governments to give importance to PR in development. This requires not only national consensus among political parties but also committed leadership with strong political will in central government as well as the state governments. It will give them the central co-ordinating place among other institutions or agencies which are involved in the process of nation building.

II

SITUATION IN KERALA*

Picture of PR during pre integration:

Findings

1. Historically speaking, the impact of British administration had been felt in the princely states, viz. Travancore and Cochin since the 18th century, while the remaining portion of Kerala - Malabar was directly governed by the Britishers as a district of the Madras presidency. In Travancore, for the improvement of the urban areas town improvement committees were set up in 1894. On the basis of an Act of 1894, the problem of upliftment of villages was taken up at first by the enactment of the Travancore village panchayat Act of 1925.

*Findings based on chapter 3 entitled "Panchayati Raj in Kerala" (Pages 87 to 142)
But Cochin took steps earlier for the improvement of rural areas when the state passed the Cochin village panchayat Act, 1914.

2. In 1956, when the Kerala state was formed, two pieces of panchayat legislation were in force namely the Madras village panchayat Act, 1950 which was in force in the Malabar and Kasaragod regions and the Travancore-Cochin panchayat Act, 1950 applicable to the Travancore-Cochin area. There were 892 panchayats in Kerala, formed on the basis of these two laws. Steps were taken to unify the two Acts, shortly after the reorganisation of Kerala state. It resulted in the passing of Kerala panchayat Act, 1960. The present panchayat system is based on this Act.

Present pattern

1. According to the Kerala panchayat Act, 1960, a panchayat having a population up to 10,000 is to have 8 members. Panchayats with population exceeding 10,000 will have 8 members for the first 10,000 of the population and one additional member for every 4,500 of the population in excess of 10,000 subject to maximum of 15 members. In every panchayat one seat is reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and one for women. Elections of members to panchayats are held on the basis of adult franchise by the system of secret ballot. The members of the panchayats will elect a president and vice president.
2. The state government can transfer any function to the panchayats. The president of the panchayat has been vested with the emergency power to decide and execute the works undertaken by the panchayats and also to sanction money for this purpose from the panchayat fund.

3. The major sources of the revenue of the panchayats are building tax, vehicle tax, land cess, service tax, duty on transfer of property, show tax and entertainment tax. The first four are compulsory. In addition to these taxes the panchayats have been empowered fifteen different kinds of fees. The state government also gives grants-in-aid for various purposes.

4. Every panchayat has five statutory functional committees for agriculture, sanitation, communication, public health and education. The number of members of each of these committees is determined by the panchayat.

5. Every panchayat has an executive officer belonging to the state cadre of service and assisted by a panchayat assistant and a bill collector. There are four grades of executive officers with variations in pay scales according to the four classes of panchayats.

6. Panchayats are classified into 4 grades on the basis of their income. A panchayat with an annual income of more than
Rs.1,75,000 come under special grade; those having an annual income between Rs.1,00,000 and Rs.1,75,000 come under first grade; those having an annual income between Rs.50,000 and Rs.1,00,000 come under second grade and those having an annual income of less than 50,000 come under third grade.

7. While in other states, the population of a panchayat normally ranges between 1,000 and 5,000 in Kerala, it is between 10,000 and 25,000. This has helped the panchayats to some extent to become viable units of local self government both financially and administratively. It has also helped in the formation of a sound basic unit of planning and administration in the villages. There are administrative provisions enabling the elected representatives to have some supervisory powers over the executive officer as mentioned above. The presidents and vice presidents have been directed not to accept any remuneration for the various services rendered by them, except for the prescribed sitting allowance approved by the government.

Problems

1. Having long roots in its history panchayat raj in Kerala has offered a unique pattern of one tier system by the Kerala panchayat Act, 1960. It has evolved a system of four classified grades of village panchayats based on the criteria of their
income. This experiment of PR is going on in Kerala since last three decades. Though it has achieved administrative and financial viabilities up to some extent, it has not matched itself with the successful experiments of two or three tier systems as working in Gujarat or Maharashtra.

2. Looking to the new experiments in nearby states of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh, Kerala government has also tried to provide it a second tier called "District Councils". Since elections of this new body were held in January 1991, it is premature to assess its performance. However, it is a step in the right direction to strengthen the present pattern of PR in Kerala.

Suggestions

At this stage, it is worth while to suggest that the Kerala government should take the follow up action to strengthen this new pattern. Moreover, in this context, Government of Kerala, should take into account the pattern as suggested by Ashoka Mehta Committee in its report.

Structural arrangement of PR*

Findings

1. There is a president for every village panchayat and he is elected by the members from among themselves. The

*Findings based on chapter 4 "Structural arrangement of Panchayati Raj in Kerala" (Pages 143 to 194)
president discharges mainly three functions - convene the meeting of the panchayat, forward half yearly reports to the deputy director, discharge all duties and responsibilities specifically imposed on him.

2. The vice president exercises the functions of the president when the office of the president is vacant, until a new president is elected or if the president has been continuously absent for more than fifteen days. Every meeting of a panchayat shall be presided over by the president, in his absence by the vice president.

3. Every panchayat shall forward to the director a report of its administration for each year as soon as may be after the close of such year and not later than the prescribed date, in such form with such details and through such authority as may be prescribed.

4. The 'executive authority' of every panchayat has been vested in the executive officer, appointed by the government. The government shall regulate the classifications, mode of recruitment, conditions of service etc. The permanent employees of panchayats are eligible for pension.

5. Village panchayats are discharging a wide variety of functions which have, however, been broadly divided into two categories - obligatory and discretionary.
6. In Kerala, a village court Act was passed in 1960, provides for the establishment of village court for a village or a group of villages with five members appointed by government in consultation with the panchayat or panchayats concerned.

Problems

The village panchayats have been called upon to carry out heavy works and responsibilities as those which even the municipalities and the state with wider powers and better facilities have failed (in several respects) to discharge efficiently in their respective realms. There is a wide gulf of difference between the 'real' and the 'ideal'. The Kerala panchayat Act, 1960 confers on panchayats large powers commensurate with their responsibilities. But in reality many of these powers still remain only on paper since the process of rule making has been very slow and since the government enjoys wide powers of control which occasionally leads to governmental interference in panchayat affairs.

Suggestions

The structure and working of the existing panchayat departments shows the necessity of a new pattern in the administration of village panchayats. The Vellodi committee (1967) has rightly recommended for the abolition of the existing panchayat department and the creation of 9 district
panchayat directorates, each under a district collector. If this recommendation is carried out, the panchayats will be deprived of the fostering care of a special unit and the district directorates will be left without a coordinating agency except the concerned department at the secretariat. It should be the concern of the panchayat department to ensure that the panchayats are working with reasonable efficiency and that the powers and responsibilities as provided under the relevant Act are duly conferred on the panchayats and on no account are they curtailed. Technical performance and achievement of targets set for panchayats should also be the concern of the panchayat department which should help the panchayats to rectify errors of omission and commission.

Bureaucracy and Panchayati Raj*

Findings

1. For the proper functioning of the panchayats mutual cooperation and understanding between the official and nonofficial elements is an absolute necessity. Official guidance and advice are as much important to the panchayats as nonofficial leadership and initiative.

*Findings are based on chapter 5 "Bureaucracy and Panchayati Raj" (Pages 195 to 232).
2. For establishing sound official–non-official relationship which is essential for the effective functioning of the panchayats, it is expected of both officials and non-officials to recognise each other's position and role in the panchayat set up and to promote mutual understanding and cooperation in the discharge of their respective duties and responsibilities.

3. The only effective link between rural and urban administration is the district collector. He is an officer who represents the state government in the district in the capacity of collector, district magistrate and district officer. His role both in rural and urban local administration is important.

4. The district collector controls the PRIs through controlling staff, suspending resolutions of PR bodies, removing office bearers and through suspension of PR bodies.

5. A closer contact and better relations between the panchayats and state government can be achieved only if the state government is prepared for delegation of power. It is necessary that the state government must follow a policy of decentralisation. The recent attempts of the state government to implement the District Administration Act is a right step in this direction.
Problems

1. The officials working under panchayats are often criticised for creating a smoke screen between the panchayat members and the public. Further, many of the officials as well as members of panchayats do not know the real objectives of the schemes they are expected to implement and the implications of the panchayat Act and of the rules framed under it.

2. There is no proper arrangement for imparting training to the panchayat staff and members, except the state institute of rural development. So both the staff and the members, they themselves to pick up from experience, knowledge, ability and skill required for better performance of their assigned tasks, though sporadic attempts have been made to give formal training to certain categories of personnel.

3. The permanent officers also have their own problems. They have the feeling that they are being treated by politicians as their servants and not as public servants. The tug of war between the panchayat executive officer and the panchayat committee is a common occurrence in a number of panchayats.

4. Lack of cooperation from some of the government departments with which panchayats frequently come to deal, creates another difficult situation for the latter. There has been an almost constant friction between the panchayats (or panchayat department) and the board of revenue, for instance,
on matters like revenue collection and use or ownership of land. Similarly, the panchayats find it difficult to get the necessary cooperation and assistance also from departments like public works and agriculture.

Suggestions

1. It is moreover, necessary that every effort should be made to secure the services of the best personnel for carrying out the various functions of the panchayats. The success of the rural development programmes depend largely on the quality of the staff employed. The disparity in status, emoluments and other conditions of service, existing between government servants and panchayat (local) employees should be eliminated so as to increase efficiency of the latter and also to enhance their prestige in the public eye.

2. While care is to be taken to select the best candidates available for panchayat services, vigorous and effective training of the personnel, deserves equal importance and attention at the hands of authorities concerned. Refresher training should be given to the officials. Training should aim at acquiring first hand account of the villagers, their way of life, their problems and their hopes and aspirations without which all attempts at development will be superficial and lopsided. It would be good if the panchayat members and officials be made acquainted with the provisions of the
panchayat Act and the rules and regulations framed under it. The panchayats and its officials are in need of proper guidance, direction and protection as well as reasonable amount of control by the panchayat directorate.

3. The Vellodi Committee (1967) has recommended for the abolition of the existing panchayat department and the creation of district panchayat directorates, each under a district collector. But its recommendations are not fully implemented. In the recently submitted report (1988), V. Ramachandran committee recommended for the abolition of the offices of the Director and Deputy Director at the state level and Inspector of Panchayats at the village level. The various powers of these officers under the Kerala Panchayat Act are to be transferred to the commissioner for Local Government, who also looks after the urban local institutions. If this recommendation is carried out it will bring coordination in the panchayat administration at the state level. It will also provide required administrative line of control and accountability from the state level to village level.

Financial Organisation in PR*

*Findings based on chapter 6, "Financial Organization in Panchayati Raj System" (Pages 233 to 285).
responsibilities as well as to chalk out plans for the future, depends mainly upon its revenue resources.

2. A sound system of panchayat finance should generally rest on a sound foundation of panchayat taxation which is the only means to make these bodies self governing and self reliant institutions. A panchayat can never be a self governing institution, if it is not made to mobilise a major part of its revenue.

3. Non tax sources, which at present play a less important role on the local finance of Kerala, as it is found in other states. At present fees collected under licences and on permissions granted are the only two important sources of non tax revenues of the local bodies in Kerala. Therefore, the income coming from this sources is negligible.

Problems

1. Dearth of financial resources as allocated by the panchayat Act presents another serious problem to Kerala panchayats. It may not be wrong to say that, Kerala panchayats are financially far better off than their counterparts in other states of India and also that there are panchayats in Kerala with larger in size and gross income than of the municipalities. But if the total income of an average panchayat is considered, in relation to its population strength it can be clearly seen that the percapita income of a Kerala panchayat is very low.
2. It has created a paradoxical situation with regard to income and expenditure. Most of the panchayats have been experiencing acute financial problems and are not in a position to carry out even a part of the programmes chalked out by them and instances of the panchayats being forced to give up several of their cherished schemes for want of funds are not rare. In some other cases the funds available are not adequate to meet even the minimum expenses. The budget estimates of a good many panchayats do not bear any semblance to the actuals. There is too much of dependence on government by the panchayats for funds and very little attempt is being made by them to exploit their internal resources. Default in tax collection also constitutes another cause for the shortage of funds. Accumulation of arrears of uncollected taxes is largely due to the inefficiency of the responsible staff, who very often appear to be reluctant to take steps against evaders and late payers of taxes.

Suggestions

1. The financial resources of panchayats need be reinforced as most of the panchayats find it difficult to carry out their programmes on account of paucity of funds. It is gratifying to learn that recently the state government has decided to increase the amount of grants to panchayats. It is a step in the right direction. Yet, when we peep into the under-
developed and developing stage of our village economy, the enhance grants will not be found adequate to meet the requirements of the panchayats. The panchayats should be encouraged to tap at internal resources, instead of always depending upon government for funds – by undertaking activities of a remunerative character, such as starting cottage and small scale industries, developing fisheries, managing markets, slaughter houses, theatres and the like. The state government should take adequate and immediate steps to implement the recommendations of panchayat finance commission 1985 (for details see appendix IV).

2. The concept of planning should be clearly defined and the areas of such planning should be clearly demarcated. All the developmental agencies working in the district like District Rural Development Agency must be merged with panchayati raj bodies. Further, the lead banks operating in each district should be involved in the preparation of plans – financial and physical. The commercial banks are now involved in the preparation of area plans.

3. A plan becomes an instrument of action only when financial provisions stipulated in it finds a place in the budget and provisions thus made are also available for actual use. There has to be a mechanism to ensure that a district plan is faithfully reflected in the budget. These district budget
should be incorporated into state budgets so that consolidate provisions as well as provisions representing totals of district budgets are shown in it separately. The planning machinery at the district level should have adequate technical staff. A multi disciplinary technical planning cell must be established at the district level.

People and Panchayati Raj*

Findings

1. Due to the prevailing ethos of that time, the political parties in Kerala did not take part in the panchayat poll of 1963. But they have actively and openly participated in the later elections held in 1979 and 1988. Even in the latest election of district councils, (January 1991) they have involved themselves, from the selection of candidates to the preparation of programmes, canvassing and propaganda. It obviously proves that political parties in Kerala have considered this PR institutions as the basis of their state level politics and for that matter even for national level politics.

2. In Kerala, the old upper caste feudal leadership has been now replaced by the leadership emerging from the middle class

*Findings based on chapter 7, "People and Panchayati Raj" (Pages 286 to 336).
strata of different castes. The groups of the rural population at the periphery of PR are trying to influence the present leadership by their numerical strength. The present composition of new leadership distinguishes itself from the old leadership. It is comparatively more young, educated, goal-oriented, development-oriented and affiliated with political parties working in the state.

3. Political instability in the state has retarded to a considerable extent the progress of village panchayats. The panchayats have been converted into instruments of exploitation by factional groups and interested persons. Coalition politics of the state is responsible for it. Neither the congress nor the communists can escape from it.

4. During the last three decades, the lack of people's interest, initiative and participation in panchayat affairs except in elections constitute a serious obstacle to the efficient functioning of the village panchayats. Though recently the attitude of the majority of the people with regard to the programmes of rural development has undergone change. Still some groups have inhibition and apathy towards the panchayats which they often consider as mere tax collecting agencies.
Problems

1. The active participation of political parties in PR has received high criticism from the sarvodaya people working in the state. To them it has hampered the developmental activities at the village level which does not require party based approach. Moreover, it has divided the society in village area. Therefore, it has disturbed the social fabric of the villages due to their internal competition and political fight.

2. The PR in Kerala at present is facing problem of unbiased and developmental oriented leadership. Although elections have made the way for the new leadership as described previously, the fact is that due to the direct involvement of political parties the leadership at the village level has become more politicised and biased. Therefore, their narrow outlook based on party interest and patronage is coming in the way of balanced and rapid development of rural areas.

3. The marginal groups of the rural population at the periphery of PR are trying to influence with their numerical strength but without success. This naturally leads them to alienation towards PR.

4. Generally speaking lack of overall interest, initiative and participation on the part of the people in panchayat affairs is a serious problem before the panchayats. Most of
them consider panchayats as nothing but tax collecting agencies as pointed out earlier. It is also a direct impact of the caste and faction based village level politics in which they do not expect any good outcome. This is more applicable to the weaker sections of the society.

Suggestions

1. Looking to the present political situation in Kerala it is highly impossible and impractical to disallow political parties in taking part in the elections. The formal but ineffective ban on political parties will encourage them to play politics indirectly without responsibilities. Therefore, the suggestion of Ashoka Mehta Committee is practical and pragmatic. It recommends that political parties should be allowed to participate openly at all levels. The open and direct participation of political parties would facilitate healthier linkages with higher level political process and also bring accountabilities among the village panchayat leaders.

2. As suggested by Rikhavadas Shah committee in Gujarat, the office bearers of the panchayat institutions should resign from their respective parties when they are elected. They are expected to work like speakers of the legislatures. This will neutralise the party politics and minimise the internal strife between the panchayat leaders.
3. The active and cooperative participation of the people in PR is a nation wide problem. It has been proved again and again by different committees and commissions appointed by different states and centre that village people are not attending even the meetings of village assemblies. For that matter it can be suggested that convenient day, time, place etc. should be taken into account by the panchayat authorities. Moreover, conscious and constant efforts should be made from the higher level of PR and state government to make them realise that their active participation is really meaningful in rural development. Therefore, some powers should be allotted to village assemblies for providing checks and balances on the working of the village panchayats.

Panchayats and Pollution Control*

Findings

1. PR bodies are better fitted to carry out preventive measures in the public health area than to provide hospitals and dispensaries for remedial treatment.

2. The general lack of cleanliness in villages is due to the absence of any organised efforts to dispose of refusals in a manner which will render them innocuous to the health

*Findings based on chapter 8, "Panchayats and Pollution Control" (Pages 337 to 361)
of the people.

3. The development of civic consciousness is essential for effecting any improvement of environmental hygienic. Such civic consciousness can be created only by general and health education.

4. Frequent digging public thoroughfare (roads) by different departments in unco-ordinated manner often results into obstruction to public drains and sewerlines.

5. Industrial units create serious problems of pollution particularly at places where industrial estates are developed or big units are erected. Discharge of gaseous materials into atmosphere or even large scale burning of inflammable gases do pose a great threat of air pollution.

Problems

1. Chemicals and toxic wastes in liquid form which may not obstruct the flow in the drain but might cause nuisance and hazards as emission of gas, erosion of drain lining etc. and thereby pose danger to public health.

2. Dangerous liquids like petroleum which may be highly inflammable and may have disastrous consequences on human life.

3. Eroded and ill maintained drain and sewer course may pollute the subsurface water source also.
4. Obstruction and blockage in closed sewer courses resulting into sewer seepage, logging and sub surface leakage at times becomes an extremely ticklish problem which is normally not noticed in formative days.

5. Subsurface water pollution is the most natural consequence of unco-ordinated efforts on the part of public as well as government agencies executing developmental works. Dumping of garbage in absolutely careless manner not only obstructs the thoroughfare, it also creates perpetual problems.

6. More than 500 million litres of industrial effluent are being dumped daily into the rivers of Kerala, besides untreated human wastes.

7. Waters in Kuttanad, the rice bow of Kerala have been severely polluted by massive application of pesticides in paddy fields. In one crop season 1,000 tonnes of pesticides of 46 different formulations are used and they are leached out into water ways.

8. Five of the ten major rivers - Chaliyar, Chalakkudy, Periyar, Pampa and Kallada are affected by pollution. Chaliyar river which supplies drinking water to Calicut city is the worst polluted, until the state government ordered the closing of the Gwalior Rayons factory at Mavoor, that was letting out 548 lakhs litres of waste per day into the river turning the water dark brown.
Suggestions

1. It is very important to educate general public about hygienic practices and pollution awareness habits, through general information campaigns, seminars, audio-visual demonstrations, advertisements, slides in cinema theatres etc. National Cadet Corps units of the schools and colleges would go a long way in creating general awareness among student community. After this the students can even undertake educating people in their respective areas. For aged rural illiterate people, particularly women folk and children an entirely different kind of education campaign is needed. There the visuals would be more effective and repeated exposure to such visuals may result in greater retention of the message.

2. There is a great possibility of coordination with voluntary agencies for extension work. In fact proper public relations would not only result in proper education to people, it would also make the local administration more responsive where people would develop and sustain faith in it.

3. The existing provisions in the local bodies legislations are elaborate on certain aspects of civic services, but specific awareness of pollution and its control is not explicit. Punishment for violation of provisions are not stringent and very often, people get away with idea if the local administration, particularly Kerala panchayat directorate, ensures prompt
services in discharging its responsibilities and make necessary arrangements for being responsive to complaints of general public besides maintaining close liaison with other agencies like state pollution control board.

4. Special efforts should be made to involve panchayats by creating awareness among its leaders towards this problem. The non-officials and officials should be imparted training to look after this problem. The mechanism of supervision and control should be provided from the higher levels of the state government which can make them more accountable and responsible.

Panchayati Raj and its relation to rural development and weaker sections*

Findings

1. Panchayati raj is an instrument for the implementation of the state development and welfare programmes. The present trend indicates that in the coming decades more and more rural developmental activities will be assigned to them. It is observed that the financial resources are not adequate even to take up the present developmental activities as assigned to them.

*Findings based on chapter 9, "Panchayati Raj and its relation to rural development and weaker sections" (Pages 362 to 419)
2. The review of the present developmental policies and their implementation proves that they overlook the weaker sections of the society which includes scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and women. It means that the benefits of the development have not reached to the weaker sections of the society.

3. Legal mechanism to provide them to reserve seats in the PR bodies may give them chance to represent their interest. However, it has brought out limitations if we compare the provisions for the scheduled castes/tribes and women in Kerala.

4. In every panchayat one seat is reserved for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and one for women. Women's seat is reserved in a ward where the largest number of women electors among the wards in the panchayat, but the schedule caste's and tribe's seat is not reserved in the same way. The authorities enjoy discretion to declare any seat in the panchayat for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

Problems

1. In Kerala, on rural development sector village panchayats have been called upon to carry out such heavy works and responsibilities as those which even municipalities with better facilities have failed to discharge efficiently. Assignment of functions to the panchayats is not always accompanied by provision of adequate financial resources. Allocation of
functions without adequate finance becomes meaningless. It is evident from the observation of the study team on panchayati raj finances* which stated "Panchayats had in many places made genuine efforts to discharge their functions. There were of course, instances where they were not discharging even the minimum obligatory functions largely due to the paucity of funds. Even basic civil amenities like safe drinking water supply, sanitation and conservancy were not being provided to the community". Prevailing financially weak position does not allow panchayats to look after the problems of weaker sections. Central and state governments should take special provision for the allocation of money to take up special programmes of the weaker sections.

2. Rural development sector in Kerala lacks proper planning especially in the area of weaker sections. Planning in panchayati raj institutions forms part of the national planning process. While planning at the local level it is essential that due importance be given to the weaker sections with special programmes prepared for them. Such special programmes should be carefully implemented by the rural development staff working in the panchayati raj.

*Report of the study team on panchayati raj finances, Ministry of Community Development Cooperation, Govt. of India, 1963, Part I, p.9
3. There is no proper arrangement for imparting training to the rural development staff. They are left, largely to themselves, to pick up from experience, knowledge, ability and skill required for better performance of their assigned tasks. The officials are more routine oriented than vested with the spirit of public service. They appear to be either indifferent or indolent and the villagers hardly look to them for purpose of getting any stimulus, encouragement or positive help from them. The position of weaker sections becomes more precarious in this situation.

4. The authorities enjoy discretion to declare any seat in the panchayat for scheduled castes and tribes. Instances of declaring seat for scheduled castes/tribes on the basis of political considerations are not few in Kerala. Officers are mostly acting according to the tunes of the ruling party. This situation helps the political leaders of the panchayats to strengthen their position. Because it disallows the real representatives of scheduled castes and tribes in panchayats. As a result no body takes care of the interest of these weaker sections.

Suggestions

1. As pointed out earlier, the panchayats should be encouraged to tap at internal resources instead of always depending upon government for funds - by undertaking acti-
vities of a remunerative character, such as starting cottage industries, developing fisheries, managing markets etc. But in the initial stage, governments - state and central - may be required to furnish them with technical assistance (where such assistance is needed) and financial aid to meet capital expenditure. Special monetary aid to the very poor panchayats by the governments also seems necessary. The panchayat finance commission in 1985 has rightly pointed out that, "the elected bodies should be vested with adequate financial powers to carry out smoothly the obligatory and discretionary functions entrusted to them. Government may take appropriate action for revision of financial powers delegated under the 'Authorising of Expenditure Rules 1964' and 'Plan and Estimates Rules 1963'"*

2. There is an imperative need for introducing the concept of planning in rural development programme more vigorously. One of the problems is that village panchayats do not assess the local needs and execute their policies suitably, particularly with regard to the weaker sections. An imaginative planning and executive aspect is partly absent in the working of PRIs. Through planning only a fair and effective linking

of resources including contributions from the people with
the developmental programme is possible. Rural planning for
developmental programme, though in theory has not come into
effect fully for the rapid development of the country side.
In a number of panchayats where the funds could not be uti-
lised mainly because the people and the representative insti-
tutions did not know how to take advantage of the schemes.
This is largely a matter which the members of the village
panchayats, extension officers executive officers and grass
root level workers should be able to rectify through extension
and mass contact.

3. All possible efforts should be made to select the best
candidates available for panchayat services. Vigorous and
effective training should be given to them particularly those
who working in the rural development sector. Training should
aid at acquiring first hand account of the villagers (especia-
lly of weaker sections) their way of life, their problems
without which all attempts at development will be superficial.

4. As suggested by Darji and Shah Committee in Gujarat,
over and above the seats, position in panchayats should be
reserved in the villages where the population of scheduled
castes/tribes represents more than 60% of the total population.
In Kerala, the social justice committees (Gujarat model) should
be formed with more powers and representation of the weaker
sections like scheduled castes/tribes and women to look after their problems. Special programmes in budget should be earmarked for these sections. About the weaker sections and their role in PRIs, the Ashoka Mehta committee has rightly said, "If PRIs are to emerge as custodians of their socio-economic interests, it will necessitate active involvement of these democratic and representative bodies in the formulation of imaginatively planned programmatic action through identification of targeted groups so as to ensure that the benefits reach the legitimate beneficiaries".

5. As it is practiced in Gujarat, to encourage progressive panchayats a state level committee should be formed to locate best panchayats which have done commendable work in the area of rural development and weaker sections. Such panchayats should be awarded the certificate, shield and lucrative cash prizes. It will generate competition among the panchayats for better performance.

In concluding remarks the researcher agrees fully with Dr. Iqbal Narain*, to whom the panchayati raj is a matter of faith. He enumerates six compelling reasons for its survival:

(1) Unless panchayati raj is established at the grass roots level as a system of rural local government, democracy in India would remain almost suspended in thin air.

(2) Development in India has suffered because it has failed to mobilise people's participation to the required extent and such mobilisation is possible only under panchayati raj system.

(3) Panchayati raj offers the best auspices for moving in the direction of decentralised planning. It is possible to have country to have both national planning and planning from below.

(4) Panchayati raj has given fillip to the process of bridging the gulf between the people and the administration (ie, bureaucracy).

(5) Democracy in no country of the world, whether developed or developing, can survive unless there is continuous flow of leadership from bottom upwards.

(6) Finally, the state of rural communication is really poor in the country. The revival of panchayati raj would provide proper auspices for

*Text of an Inaugural Address delivered at Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar on 28 September, 1987 in connection with a seminar on Revival of Panchayati Raj.
As stated in previous pages (Part I) the researcher has to put forward that PRIs in its last phase of revival should be provided sound footing by required constitutional guarantees and political backings based on national consensus. The trend at the national level at present creates hopes in this matter by the introduction of constitution (sixty fourth amendment) Bill, 1989.

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The problems which are discussed in the second part on the basis of the findings about the different aspects of PR in Kerala have posed challenges before these institutions. The total impact of these problems may damage the future prospects of PR in Kerala.

The humble suggestions made by the researcher may help to solve these problems, if sincerely implemented by the concerned authorities of the state government. In this situation the future prospects of PR in Kerala would be bright and encouraging.

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Apart from the present problems and difficulties PR in Kerala has recorded some achievements to its credit. The
panchayats in Kerala have been associated with developmental activities on a moderate scale for a reasonably long time, and more so after the passing of the Kerala Panchayat Act, 1960, as for example, agriculture, cooperatives, public health, education etc. There are agricultural farms, a few cottage industries, health centres – primary and secondary schools and control of markets, slaughter houses, ferry service etc. has also been increasingly brought under village panchayats. Further the repair and maintenance of roads and some of the activities connected with the agricultural production, hitherto undertaken by the public works department and the agricultural department respectively, are now being transferred to the panchayats. In almost all panchayats, popular committees have already been set up to suggest reforms taken up by the government on various aspects relating to the panchayat. These democratic and developmental processes have generated a developmental psyche in the average rural Keralite. They have also brought more and more groups from the perephery of the society in the main stream. The psycho-socio atmosphere, which is generated by these achievements has created high aspirations among the people from panchayat institutions.

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It is true that panchayati raj in Kerala has not so far fulfilled, in a substantial measure, the great expectations
that it had aroused though it has the potential as people's institution at the grass roots level to deliver the goods. The failings of the panchayati raj are human failings - failings of our national character, which are not exclusive to panchayati raj. Villagers admire it as a concept, but they are disappointed and sometimes disgusted with the operational aspect of panchayati raj institutions.

The establishment of panchayati raj institutions has been a step in the right direction. The administrative innovations and devices suggested in the above chapters should go a long way to improve the tone and working of panchayati raj institutions. The suggestions, if implemented should not only improve the working of panchayati raj institutions but should also help them in gaining the confidence of the people in rural Kerala.

Panchayati raj institutions may not have done many things expected of them, but they have not been a failure. They have certainly set afoot the democratic process which has proved through the ages to be one of the most vigorous catalytic agents of both socio-economic and political revolutions. In this lies the real significance of panchayati raj.
Panchayati raj, thus is a multi dimensional phenomenon. Its contribution to the modernisation cannot be quantified. However, in the context of a gap between modern political super structure and traditional social base, it is a vitally important contribution. Greater dynamism in rural areas will increase the capabilities of the political system as a whole which in turn will increase the effectiveness of panchayati raj, as an instrument of modernisation.

To sum up the researcher has to say that panchayati raj is a sub system of the system working at the state level, which is itself too a sub system of the system working at the national level. Therefore, it is influenced by the currents and under currents working at the state and national level politics. Sometimes, one may feel that the prevailing political atmosphere at higher levels is not conducive for such bodies working at the grass roots level which may lead to disappointment but we have to take solace that "night is darker before the dawn".