1.1 IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENTS.

When people begin to live together in a locality, certain problems arise from communitarian living. These problems relate to provisions of civic amenities like supply of water, removal of rubbish, lighting, drainage etc., thus there arises the inevitability of local government to attend these civic problems.

But the activities of the local government are no less numerous. Indeed, there has been an impressive increase in the functions of local government. Local government has been undertaking new activities which either regulate the conduct of the citizens or are in the nature of services, such as provision of mass transport; construction of houses for the poor, supply of electricity, health centres, parks etc., In fact, local government is today much more important in the daily life of a citizen than the State or Central Government. Then a fundamental question is what is a local government?

Local government is that part of the State Government in federal countries, dealing mainly with local affairs, administered by authorities, subordinate to the State Government. Qualified residents may elect the local government independently of the State authority. Or they may consist of partly elected and partly nominated or wholly nominated members. Normally, the State Government has no jurisdiction within the local area in respect of matters administered by the local government. Thus the local government derives its power from a portion of the same electorate from which the State Government derives its powers. But the local governments are the creatures of the State Legislature. They cannot do many things without the explicit sanction of the State Government.

The local government's jurisdiction is limited to specific areas, and it has no legislative powers. Its powers to raise finances are defined and hence they are restricted. A local government functions within the provisions of the statute, which has created it. It is subordinate to the State or Provincial Government, which exercises control and supervision...
over it. Under certain circumstances, the State Government can suspend or dissolve a local
government 3.

The local government institutions are known by different names. In India the popular
term is local self-government; in England local authorities; in other places local government.
In India the Provincial Governments were known as local governments. The local self-
government includes both Urban and Rural. The Urban local authorities include
Corporations, Municipalities and Town Committees. The Rural local government includes
Panchayats, Gaon Panchayats and Gaon Sabhas.

India lives in her villages and there has been a traditional presence of what may be
called ‘grass-root’ level representative institutions of local self-government all over India
even before independence. However the nature and degree of popular participation varied
rather widely from time to time – region to region 4. However the modern village panchayats
are essentially the product of British rule. But after the independence and under the impact
of the Gandhian ideology of rural development, there has been a gradual development of
institutions, supposed to embody the principals of democratic decentralization. The objectives
of these grass root level institutions are:

1) To facilitate rapid rural development in all fields.
2) To involve the people in the process of development.
3) To ensure social justice; empowerment of SC, ST, Women and backward Class
   people.

Today, the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) have varieties of functions related to
day-to-day life of the rural people without which the rural life cannot be imagined. It has the
responsibility to provide civic amenities, housing, sites, loans, protection of environment,
ensuring harmony in the society etc. Hence we can call PRI as an institution of a service
body where the popular initiative and involvement of the local people is compulsory in all its
process. By popular involvement of the local people, it avoids the conflicts; there will be
less intervention of bureaucrats; transparency will also be ensured apart from fixing the
responsibilities on the local people themselves.
As regards the rationale of the Panchayati Raj, it may be pointed out that Panchayati Raj does not simply represent an institutional framework of rural local government. Much more than that, it symbolizes a certain political philosophy and a technique of administration. Politically, Panchayati Raj implies the cultivation of democracy at the grass root level of the political system and administratively, it means decentralisation of power and authority to the lowest limb of the governmental structure, thereby enabling the residents of the farthest hamlet of the country to share the responsibility of running its affairs. The phrase 'democratic decentralisation', used by the Balwantray Mehta Team to designate the system, conveys, perhaps, the fullest connotation of this indigenous term, Panchayati Raj. It is working not only for the betterment of the economic conditions of the society but, also to pursue a good and dignified life. “It is a process”, as Karl Von Vorys, points out, “which includes social and economic changes and whose focus is the development of the governmental capacity to direct the course and the rate of social and economic change”. In other words, it is got to be a three-dimensional process – social, economic and political.

From the beginning, Karnataka has imbibed a rich and incessant heritage of self-governing institutions keeping in harmony with the changing socio-economic and political conditions in the course of history. In ancient Karnataka, the tradition of village bodies was very strong. Even in centralized monarch the local self-government bodies were very much prevalent and village assemblies functioned and dealt with local problems.

But it was only under the guidance of the British, the local government institutions gained new attention and new character in Karnataka State. The beginning of modern local government in Mysore (Karnataka) was with the establishment of separate “Local Fund” in 1862 and of “Local Fund Committee” in 1874. And these institutions were continued under various Regulations. After the re-organisation of the State, the local self-government established by virtue of Karnataka Local Boards and Village Panchayat Act, 1959 came to stay with us.

However, many experiences with serious efforts were made for ensuring the effective Panchayat Raj administration in the State. Especially, the 1983 Act, which introduces Zilla
Parishad and Mandal Panchayats as elected bodies, has been considered as an outstanding achievement in the country by Karnataka State.

Consequent to the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, it has become mandatory to State Governments to introduce three tier PRIs. Hence, the Karnataka State also enacted new Act called Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993. The new Act was enacted in view of the 73rd Constitution Amendment for ensuring greater participation of the people and more effective implementation of rural development programmes. It also ensures greater participation of the people belonging to SC, ST, Women & BCs by providing reservations not only in contesting the elections but also in the offices of Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha of all the three tiers. Under 1993 Act, Grama Sabha plays a very important role. It will meet from time to time but six months shall not intervene between any two meetings.

1.2 THE PROBLEM.

One of the tasks stressed from the beginning of post-colonial period was to establish the welfare and egalitarian society, in the country by over coming the attacks of five giants of Hunger, Poverty, Disease, Squalor and Ignorance. This has been held to be the objectives of various plans, Community Development Programmes (CDP) and PRIs. The Five Year Plans and Programme Evaluation Organisation underlined the need of equitable distribution of gains from development and the people’s participation in the plans of development. The Balwantray Mehta report observed that “So long as we do not discover or create a representative and democratic institutions which will supply the local interest, supervision and care ……… we will never be able to evoke local interest and excite local initiative in the field of development." Hence, the need of democratic decentralizations by establishing PRIs all over the country was stressed. The majority of States in India gave importance to the democratic decentralization by establishing PRIs. However, these PRIs were completely dominated by the socially and economically privileged classes without realizing the goals of Panchayat Raj. Further at Panchayat levels, caste and class constraints have become the hampering factors.
One of the main reasons for the unimpressive performance of PRIs is factionalism. There have been several occasions when factionalism led to the suspension of popularly elected bodies; a total halt in development works and strained social relations.

The paucity of funds is yet another important factor in the unsuccessful running of Panchayat Raj machinery. The financial devolution and decentralization have not been made satisfactorily.

Since PRI stands for democratic decentralization involving the hitherto neglected backward communities in the local governance is part of the developmental scheme. Scheduled caste are the people who are subject to both economic and social disabilities, who engage themselves in hereditary occupations, which are not very remunerative and entail risks in matters of health and sanitation. The other groups, which are now known as predominantly tribal communities, isolated themselves from exposure to various cultural and social transformations, innovations and developments that affected the other groups. Further, the position and status of women in our society is also not conducive. Efforts are now made to bring them into mainstream of social life. PRIs have greater responsibility towards these weaker sections of society. One of the Directive Principles of State Policy states that "The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular SC and ST, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation".

Today, the challenge of rural poverty and other problems of rural society cannot be met without the active involvement of PRIs. Especially after the 73rd Amendment Act, the Panchayats are looked upon as a means to achieve socio-economic transformation of our rural society. The functions assigned to PRIs by 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 covers most of all the basic needs of rural society. With this noble objective PRI has been revitalized under the above amendments to the Constitution. Especially, various programmes for poverty alleviation to improve the living conditions of rural people, and many other programmes of Rural Development, which are determined to improve the quality of life, have been considered as new hopes in the rural society. A planned social change for development with social justice, wholesome environment, healthy condition, and better
human resources and opportunities is aimed through popular institution within the people’s reach. By contributing to the system of human rights, peace and tolerance, PRI is expected to be an agency for bringing desirable social changes.

The Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 that enacted consequential to the 73rd Amendment Act, 1992, has significantly widened the scope and sphere of PRIs, apart from establishing uniform three-tier system of PR bodies in Karnataka. Planning at these levels have been ensured to avail, exploiting the local resources. Grama Sabhas have to be conducted compulsorily at least two times a year. The reservations to SC, ST Women and BCs have been provided under KPR Act, 1993. Besides, there are various programmes and schemes by Central and State Governments to improve the overall living conditions of rural poor. However, if the Government seems to have overcome some vital problems there will be some more problems that may creep in. For example, under the 1983 and 1993 Act, though the dominations of socially and economically privileged class in Panchayat Raj administration has been over come by State to some extent, the domination of ‘haves’ within the lower castes has replaced the previous problems. Hence, it is generally believed that the socio-economic benefits of rural development programmes through PRIs have not gone sufficiently to the really deserved and needy people.

The above factors have immensely impressed the researcher to undertake the present research work. Further, whether the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 has changed the life style of political, economic and social life of the people in the rural area is a pertinent question. Further, what kind of achievements have been made in Mysore District, which is known for its all round developments under the rule of many Wodeyars.

What kind of achievements have been done is another pertinent question that bothered. It motivated the researcher to investigate, the impact of KPR Act, 1993 in Mysore district, so that the remedies may be suggested for making them effective instrument for improving the quality life of rural people.

As a part of research work a field study has been carried out in Mysore district, which is well known for its historical importance in the whole of Karnataka. Mysore, being once
the capital of the erst while princely state of Mysore, retains some of the traces of its past
glory even to this day. It was the princely State of Mysore, which was the first to come
under the spell of democracy in those days of fast democratization of the Indian Native States
in India.

Mysore district was bifurcated into Mysore and Chamarajanagar in the year 1997, for
administrative convenience. At present, Mysore district consist of Mysore, Nanjangud, KR
Nagar, TN Pura, Hunsur, HD Kote and Periyapatna taluks have been considered for the
purpose of Research. The district provides fairly good background of panchayat raj system
with diversity of economic activities. It is a tourist and industrial place where agriculture is
also one of the important professions. The population of SC, ST living in the district, is of
substantial size. However the exploitation of SC/ST is often rampant in the district. Further,
it is subject to varieties of experiences in the functions of PRIs. These factors impressed the
researcher to choose Mysore district as an area for study.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY.

Over the last 110 years, the modern PRIs have been considered as part of rural
people. In spite of the ignorance by the various governments at the Central and State levels,
it has come to stay with the people, and today the life of ruralites cannot be imagined without
PRIs. Because, majority of Rural Development programmes are being implemented through
the PRIs. While implementing the programmes, the social justice to SC, ST women and
backward class are also looked into. This is obviously for the purpose of establishing the
egalitarian society besides eliminating all kinds of exploitations. It is clear from the
Constitution and the KPR Act, 1993, the PRIs are the institution of grass-root democracy and
it is only with the active participation of the rural people that its spirit, purpose and contents
will be more effectively fulfilled.

The objectives of the present study are to assess:

A) To what extent the judicial interpretation / decisions have helped the PRIs to
overcome the deficiencies in the 1993 Act, and uphold the spirit of grass root
democracy.
B) To what extent the participation of the people have been ensured in planning and implementing the various schemes and programmes, and how effective has been the functioning of gram sabha.

C) How far the PRIs are capable of creating their own financial resources and how effectively they have utilized the various funds of State and Central Governments.

D) Whether the interests of weaker sections have been adequately protected by the PRIs.

E) How effective the PRIs have been in providing the basic needs and reasonable services to the people adequately.

F) What is the contribution of PRIs in protecting the environment and

G) What is the overall image of PRIs in the eye of rural people?

It is very important to note that, in the system of direct democracy and that too at the grass root level, the transparency should prevail and if the people are aware about their rights, the PRIs would be definitely a successful attempt of the polity. However, it all depends upon the capacity of PRIs to generate interest in the people by providing reasonable services in terms of provisions of basic needs.

The answers to the above issues will be traced in the data. For the purpose of objective evaluation of the working of PRIs an empirical study will be made with reference to Mysore district.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

The study is primarily based on analytical and empirical research. Under the analytical research the primary sources have been collected from the important documents like Reports of the various committees constituted by the Central and State governments, Acts, Regulations, Rules, Government notifications, Gazette notifications, Government orders, Constitutional provisions, Judicial decisions, Circular, Gazetteers, Economic Survey Reports, Annual plans of Central and State Governments, Report of Five Year Plans, Reference Manuals, Census Reports, Annual and Progress reports of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj department and Zilla Panchayats, Reports of Finance Commissions, etc. The Secondary sources materials have been collected from books, journals, articles, etc.
An empirical study is necessary on topics like working of PRI, as the research would be incomplete if the researcher is confined only to analytical or doctrinal research. Further, it is only with the effective participation of people and their consensus and the involvement of officials and non-officials that the success of PRIs can be attained. This has been proved in the last few decades in Mysore district while implementing the various development activities. This could be assessed only by non-doctrinal or empirical research.

For the purpose of the present study the Mysore district as a whole, Mysore taluk and two Grama Panchayats each selected at random from seven taluks of Mysore district, have been chosen. Further two Grama Panchayats i.e., Siddalingapura and Udbur Grama Panchayats in Mysore Taluks have been chosen for detailed study under the scheme. The study tries to reveal to what extent the PRIs are successful in Karnataka, that too in Mysore district especially after the implementation of 73rd Amendment Act, 1992 and KPR Act, 1993.

For the empirical study the data have been collected from the following sources:
A) Collection of facts and figures from Grama Panchayats, Taluk Panchayats, Zilla Panchayats and the Department of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.
B) Detailed study of the achievements by going through the various records maintained by the above institutions.
C) Consulting the officials of all levels of the above institutions.
D) Personal observations of the Grama Panchayats, Taluk Panchayat, Zilla Panchayat meetings and Grama Sabhas.
E) Collection of opinions through the Schedules.

For the administration of schedules, two Grama Panchayats from each taluks of Mysore district have been chosen at random. Thus, two Grama Panchayats each from Mysore taluk, T.Narasipur Taluk Nanjangud taluk, KR Nagar taluk, Hunsur taluk, HD Kote taluk and Periyapatna taluks have been chosen. In each Grama Panchayats the schedule is administered to all the elected members including the Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha to assess their overall image of Panchayat Raj Institutions and their impact on rural people with the extent of their satisfaction. Likewise, the opinions of Taluk Panchayat (Mysore) and Mysore
Zilla Panchayat Members including the non-elected members have also been collected to assess the overall functions of Panchayat Raj institutions in Mysore District. For the purpose of detailed and comprehensive study, two Grama Panchayats have been chosen in Mysore taluk. They are Siddhalingapua Grama Panchayat and Udbur Grama Panchayat. Apart from administering the Schedule to the members these two Grama Panchayats, the opinions of common man (100 each from both Grama Panchayats) regarding the overall functioning of Grama Panchayats have been collected. The effective functioning of Grama Panchayat is depending upon the good administration of Secretary and other temporary employees like Bill Collector, attendors, waterman etc. Hence, to know the nature and extent of Grama Panchayat administration and to know the genuine problem of Grama Panchayats the opinions have been collected from Secretaries and other menial staffs. Lastly, the opinions of officials of Taluk Panchayats and Zilla Panchayats, who really control and monitor the administration of Grama panchayats, have also been collected.

1.5 ORGANISATION.

Chapter I is an Introductory chapter briefly focusing attention on the evolution of Panchayat Raj in India and in Karnataka, the problem for investigation, the scope and objective of the study and the methodology adopted and the organization of Chapters.

Chapter II deals with Evolution of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) in ancient, Medieval and in the British period. The discussion comprehends the developments ranging from the period of Vedas till India attained her Independence.

Chapter III deals with The Development of PRIs in Postcolonial period. This chapter also deals with the Mahatma Gandhijis concept of Village Panchayats along with the debates in the Constituent Assembly. It also deals with the various Committee Reports and other efforts made in implementing the PRI in the country.

Chapter IV deals with The Historical Evolution of Panchayat Raj System and the Decentralisation of Power in Karnataka from the beginning to present day. The Chapter will examine the various Committees report apart from the impact of Committees of Central Government.
Chapter V deals with The Analysis of Legal Framework for Grass root Democracy under Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993. This Chapter also focuses on various important provisions of Karnataka Panchayat Act, 1993, along with the various rules enacted. It also deals with the various relevant case laws decided by the High Court of Karnataka and Supreme Court of India.

Chapter VI deals with The Financial Resources of PRIs. It mainly focuses on the tax, fees collected by the Gram Panchayats in accordance with various provisions of Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act. It also deals with State Finance Commission, Tenth and Eleventh Finance Commission grants and recommendations that are considered as boost to the PRIs.

Chapter VII deals with The Evolution and Development of PRIs in Mysore District. It mainly focuses on Village Panchayats in ancient Mysore to present day structure of the PRIs. It also focused on the general formations about the Mysore district regarding the area, topography and other aspects.

Chapter VIII deals with The Evaluation, Implementations, of various programmes including the various rural development programmes of State Government and Central Government through the Panchayati Raj Institutions. This chapter examines implementation of the various programmes in Mysore district only. It also examines whether the implementation and achievement of the various programmes have been executed in accordance with the guidelines of the State and Central governments.

Chapter IX deals with The Direct democracy or the position of Village assembly i.e., Grama Sabha. After 73rd Amendment Act 1992, and under the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act 1993, how these Grama Sabha are functioning. This chapter also focuses on existence of Grama Sabha in ancient India and Karnataka besides its evolution.

Chapter X deals with conclusions, which includes objective inferences made on the basis of present study. The discussion will focus on the achievements and deficiencies of PRIs in Mysore district along with making suitable suggestions.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

3. Sri Ram Maheswari, *op.cit.*, P.1
9. Indian Constitution, Article. 46.
11. According to International Labour Organisation, the basic needs are taken to include two elements. First, they include certain minimum requirements of a family for private consumption, adequate food, shelter and clothing. Second they include essential service, provided by and for the rural communities at large, such as safe drinking water, sanitation, public transport, health and education facilities. *Quoted In*: Kempe R.Hope *Rural Development and Social change, Rural Development Digest*, Vol.3 Jan. 1980. No. 1 Hyderabad. P.5
12. The Schedules/Questionnaires used for the purpose of collecting data have been appended in appendix VII-XII.