'Democratic Decentralization', which was introduced in India in the shape of 'panchayati raj' in 1959, as a national policy with the full support of the 'National Development Council' and the 'Planning Commission', has seen various phases in its operation. In the initial phase of growth (1959-67) a number of State Governments passed legislation to set up Panchayati raj institutions in their respective states. Today panchayati raj, covers all the States, except Meghalaya and Nagaland. The institution of village panchayat exists in all States and Union Territories, except Lakshadweep, Pondicherry and Mizoram. There are at present 2,12,248 village panchayats, 4,481 panchayat samitis and 252 zila parishads in India.

Being a state subject, the progress of panchayati raj has not been uniform all over the country. Moreover, the approach and orientations of the State Governments (and for that matter of governments at all levels) are, by and large, characterised by a general sense of distrust towards the institutions of local government. This has partly been the legacy of the British rule and partly due

2. Ibid.
to the competitive nature of these institutions for power. In order to hide their lack of faith on these institutions, the State Governments have often been noticed levelling charges of inefficiency and nepotism against the panchayati raj institutions. It is as a result of this psychology that they have devised various types of control mechanisms and measures in order to exercise a close supervision and control over them. Similarly, the experience of most of the states seems to be that these bodies have not been given functional autonomy. Therefore, it is evident that the role, status and performance of panchayati raj institutions has largely depended on the ideological background and change orientation of state governments.

It may, however, be underlined that the functioning of these institutions during the course of their existence of over a quarter of a century has been marked by a consistent decline. There are no two opinions that they had had an excellent start. An evidence to this effect is available in the unparalleled degree of enthusiasm that some of the state governments displayed in the founding of these institutions. A reasonably substantial degree of power was also decentralized to them almost everywhere. Whether that enthusiasm had been infused in them by imaginative minds like Jawaharlal Nehru or whether they could not properly anticipate and analyse the true impact

of the panchayati raj institutions — cannot be pinpointed as the real reason for giving a big start to these institutions. However, the fact remains that that brief period was soon followed by an endless phase of continuous decline. Power after power was taken back by the State Governments and official after official was withdrawn from their services.¹ No effort was thus lost to tighten their hold over them and even of strangulating their very existence. Whenever any new government came into power — whether of one political hue or of another — it would give a pledge to the people to revive these institutions. But no sooner it assumed power than it forgot its 'solemn promise'. As a result, the panchayati raj remained as much ineffective and inert an institutional mechanism as ever. The Tribune very aptly sums up the position: "Powerful vested interests seem to have reduced the Gandhian concept of democracy at the grass-roots to political football, with each party in power abolishing or reviving panchayat institutions to suit its immediate aim. This trend alone can explain the frequent policy changes regarding these representative institutions... No wonder panchayats have not become truly functional, viable and effective".⁵

Similarly, G.C. Singhvi is also of the opinion that "panchayati raj is sick and suffering from certain debilitating ailments which are coming in the way of its

¹. Ibid., p.240. ². Bhatnagar observes: "... whatever little discretion had been decentralized to these institutions in the initial flush of enthusiasm, has been gradually taken back by the state governments, leaving little with them."

becoming a success." \(^6\) He further adds that the inevitable result was that panchayati raj and democratic decentralisation witnessed administration of inadequate doses of democracy and decentralisation and in the process panchayati raj ironically became a casualty. \(^7\) In a similar tone, Harold Zink and et al comment that panchayati raj bodies were supposed to be the partners and agencies for socio-economic planning in rural areas but these proved to be mere executive agencies of state governments. \(^6\) Even Jawaharlal Nehru had admitted this fact while speaking about the unsatisfactory functioning of such types of bodies in India. He observed, "There is hardly a country where the gap between ideals and performance is so big as in India." \(^9\)

Before we identify the areas where it has suffered the most, a reference may be made at the outset about the overall image of panchayati raj. The Balwantray Mehta and other Committees, out of the matrix of which it had emerged, were crystal clear that panchayati raj would form the lowermost rung of our governmental system and, as such, would work autonomously. But, unfortunately, the whole of this concept and approach to this nicely planned

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7. Ibid.
Institutional fabric was watered down in the course of its development. Today, it has degenerated into (at best) an executive agency of the State Government. As a result, a big gap has been noticed between what is said about it and what is actually observed about it. Asoka Mehta Committee, therefore, rightly observed: "Worst of all, there was lack of clarity in regard to the concept of Panchayati Raj itself and the objectives for which it should stand". Obviously, such a situation has led to a crisis of expectations all along the line.

To come to the details of the functioning of the panchayati raj; in the first place, a reference may be made to the frequent changes that have been effected in its structural frame. Almost every state which implemented the scheme, began with a three-tier structure. However, Assam and West Bengal had gone in for four-tiers. But as time passed on, and the initial enthusiasm flagged down, State Governments began to mutilate its frame. Assam, for instance, modified the scheme thrice.

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10. Ibid., p.17.

11. Jawaharlal Nehru said, "In India, there is so much difference between theory and practice that, while ideas soar high, execution is meagre".


See also The Asoka Mehta Committee Report, p.3.

The Committee observed: "In Assam, there have been shifts in the tiers and functions assigned".
Bihar had adopted, right from the beginning a cautious approach. It had introduced zila parishads only in 6 districts (and not in all districts). Even there, these were soon abolished. The case of Haryana is most relevant and notable in this respect. In 1966, it inherited a three-tier system from Punjab and in 1973, it abolished with one sweep the zila parishads in the whole length and breadth of the State. In Haryana, a large number of small panchayats were set up together with zila parishads with very limited powers. They could not achieve much owing to the extreme paucity of powers and resources. In Madhya Pradesh, the Act embodying the scheme of democratic decentralization was sought to be implemented in a piecemeal manner—an approach that proved counter-productive. The Akali-Janta Government had decided in August 1979 to abolish all the 119 panchayat samitis in the state on the ground that these institutions "promoted factionalism in the villages". Orissa Government also abolished the apex-tier (zila parishad) in 1975.

These distortions, combined with the arguments advanced by the respective Governments in defence of the steps they had taken, let loose a country-wide debate on the basic structure of panchayati raj—whether it should be a two-tier structure or a three-tier structure or even four-tier structure. Further, which of the tiers should be made the

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15. The Asoke Matha Committee Report, p. 4.
focal point or the main centre of power? Some of the states which implemented the Belwantray Mehta model, favoured the middle tier (panchayat samiti) as the most appropriate, viable and suitable unit for decentralization of powers, whereas some others considered the sila parishad to be more effective and suitable for the purpose. Accordingly, varied patterns of panchayati raj emerged in various states creating a lot of confusion regarding the focal point of decentralization. It has been experienced that the inconclusive debate on 'block' or 'district' or 'sub-division' as the basic unit for decentralization, that followed, did not help the system in either way. Rather, it made the confusion in the sphere of panchayati raj further confounded.

Thus, the panchayati raj institutions failed to become a part of the whole democratic system of the country. There has been a lack of organic linkage among these institutions and these were kept aloof from the democratic set-up at the state as well as the National level.

Another important dimension of distortion is the irregularity of elections to its various institutions. In fact, the state governments never realised the growing importance and urgency of holding the timely and regular elections to these institutions. It has been widely observed that the elections are postponed time and again on one

17. Refer to the Reports of Rajinder Singh Committee (Punjab), Study Team on District Administration (Administrative Reforms Commission), Sondivar Committee and Mehta Committee.
pretex or the other. There is hardly a state in the
country where the Government might have seriously attended
to this aspect of the panchayati raj. To cite a few cases
of lapse on the part of the State Governments, elections were
not held to village panchayats for 11 years in Andhra Pradesh, 8
years in Haryana, 12 years in Tamil Nadu, 8 years in
Orissa and in Sikkim, for about 10 years in Karnataka, etc., etc.

It is interesting to note in this respect that it
has become an established pattern of our political life that
every new government that comes into being after the elections,
makes a promise to hold elections to panchayati raj institutions.
But no sooner it comes into being, than it forgets the promises
given to the electorate. Some of these governments which do
not want to distort their image so soon, would go in for
elections to the village panchayat. The moment these are over,
their enthusiasm would vanish and they would not thus go in
for the elections to the panchayat samiti and zila parishad.
Even the Janta Party Government did not fare better in this
respect. Obviously, the result would be that the higher tiers
would continue to be bureaucratically managed. Take the case
of Haryana and Punjab. Elections to the village panchayats
were held there in June 1978 and August 1978 respectively. In
Haryana, the zila parishad, abolished in 1973, have not been

revived, despite several promises to that effect (made in 1977\textsuperscript{22} and 1980\textsuperscript{23}). Similarly, panchayat samitis too have met the same fate. Ever since their five-year term had exhausted, these are being managed by the local bureaucracy.\textsuperscript{24} In Punjab too, both these higher tiers did not see elections ever since 1975.\textsuperscript{25} The same trend was followed by Andhra Pradesh where elections to these bodies took place in May 1981, after a long gap of eleven years. Earlier, elections to these bodies in the State were held in 1959, 1964 and 1970. Karnataka is another example of such a type of stagnation which witnessed the polls in 1978 and that too after a lapse of one decade.\textsuperscript{26}

Thus, the state governments have developed the habit of keeping the panchayati raj institutions under long spells of suspension and supersession and not holding elections at the due time. Confessing this fact, Rao Harendra Singh, Union Agriculture Minister, while addressing the 10th Annual Conference of the All-India Panchayat Parishad, at Kurukshetra, on 12th July, 1980, observed that

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{22} The Tribune, 5.12.1977, p.9.
  \item \textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 18.6.1980, p.4.
  \item The Tribune sums up: "The Haryana Panchayati Raj Review Committee reiterated today its recommendations for the revival of the three-tier panchayati raj system and the transfer of substantial powers to the panchayati raj institutions."
  \item \textsuperscript{24} K.S. Bhoria, "Panchayati Raj in Haryana", in Panchayat Sandesh, Op. Cit., p.12.
  \item See also The Tribune, 16.7.1982, p.3.
  \item The Tribune explains: A Cabinet Sub-Committee decided to defer elections to the panchayat samitis until after the elections to the village panchayats due in June 1983.
  \item \textsuperscript{25} Panchayat Sandesh, November 1982, Vol. XXII, No. 7, p.6.
  \item \textsuperscript{26} B.S. Bhargava, in Panchayat Sandesh, Op. Cit., p.19.
\end{itemize}
panchayats had become a plaything of political parties. He regretted that the administrative authorities did not respect panchayats, and sarpanches were frequently suspended on frivolous charges made by the politicians. He, further added that in certain states elections to panchayats had not been held for the past 10 years. Thus, it is the misfortune of panchayati raj bodies that elections for them have been conducted after long intervals and, most probably (as The Tribune sums up) only when the ruling party thought it would be able to secure a majority of seats and thus turn village bodies into pocket boroughs and vote banks.

In this connection, the Asoka Mehta Committee significantly observes: "The functioning of the Panchayati Raj system thus became discouraging. As if this was not enough, some of the State Governments would postpone the holding of elections or supersede some of the important tiers of PRI (panchayati raj institutions) for one reason or the other. The lukewarm attitude of the political elite at higher levels towards strengthening of the democratic process at the grass roots was generally the crux of the matter". Accordingly, the Committee recommended that the State Government should not supersede

27. The Tribune, 13.7.1980, p.3.
the panchayati raj institutions on partisan grounds, and if supersession becomes necessary, the bodies disbanded be replaced by elected ones within six months. Furthermore, the State Government should not postpone elections as had happened. The Committee said, "We endorse both these views; in fact, we consider them as categorical". 30

Though there is no denying the fact that the irregularity in elections is largely due to the lack of political will on the part of the state governments, the structural pattern of panchayati raj is also responsible for this lapse to a large extent. Since the three tiers are organically linked with one another, elections to the panchayat samiti cannot be held so long as the elections to the village panchayats are complete, and, similarly to the zila parishad cannot be held unless those of the panchayat samitis are complete. But what actually happens is that after the elections to the village panchayats are over, the elections to the panchayat samitis are not taken in hand. This is largely due to the reason that the elections to all the constituent panchayats are seldom complete. The poll results of some of them must invariably be challenged in the courts of law, sometimes on genuine grounds and sometimes on false grounds perhaps with the purpose of withholding the state government from proceeding with the process further. By the time, the election petitions are finally disposed of, the stipulated term of the village panchayat expires.

30. Ibid., IV, 161, p. 53.
The result is that the government starts thinking (or is made to think) in terms of holding elections to the village panchayat afresh and, consequently, elections to the higher tiers are totally forgotten in the process. Unless, therefore, the three tiers are organically separated, a regularity in elections to each one of them may not be ensured. An evidence to this fact can be had from Maharashtra and Gujarat. In both these States, elections to all the three tiers are held simultaneously, latest in the series being 1979 (Maharashtra) and 1980 (Gujarat).

Here, a reference may also be made to the State Government's power of supersession or dissolution of these bodies. Though it is agreed that it should be used only in extreme cases but, in practice, it has been observed that this power is used on partisan grounds. It is, therefore, necessary to see that the use of this power is "kept free of political considerations". 31 The Administrative Reforms Commission (India) is of the view that before action is taken, cases involving supersession or dissolution of the Panchayati Raj bodies should be enquired into by the District Tribunal consisting of the District Collector and a subordinate judge. 32 Accordingly, the Government should pass final orders only after considering the report of the Tribunal. No doubt, the State Governments are the final authorities in matters regarding the local bodies, but

the exercise of this power should not be misused or unfettered on political grounds. However, in practice, the recommendation of the Administrative Reforms Commission on the issue stands neglected by the state governments.

Similarly, the removal of the elected members or office-bearers of panchayati raj institutions has been a practice ever since the system was evolved in the country. It is this fact which has also been responsible for reflecting an image of the panchayati raj as more of a power-mechanism than that of a development or service-mechanised agency or partnership. Political parties have already entered the field of panchayati raj. They look upon the panchayati raj institutions as 'Vote banks' for political elections and try their best to exploit them for their political ends. Ministers patronise their supporters in the villages for their personal and party ends. Similarly, corrupt but convenient functionaries (may be official or non-official) are given undue protection. Enquiries in cases of corruption are instituted, shelved or reopened according to changes in the ruling parties from time to time. Political intimidation and actual victimisation of the official element is all, too, familiar; officials and non-officials are removed by the state government if they are not the supporters of the party-in-power at the state level. Thus, this power is abused recklessly without the least consideration of the long-range interests of either of the panchayati raj or of the well-being of the rural areas.
Another area of distortion is the method of elections of the members of the panchayati raj institutions. Frequent changes in it have further eroded the confidence of the masses in this institutional fabric. 'The Committee on Panchayati Raj Elections-1965' had also noticed this defect. In this respect, particular reference may be made to the institution of the sarpanch. Being the executive head of the village panchayat, he is directly elected by the entire electorate of the village panchayat in some states, whereas he is elected indirectly by the members of the panchayat, in others. The above mentioned Committee has rightly stated: "Opinion on this issue is sharply divided not only among the states but also in every state". In Assam and Madras, the Governments changed the system from direct election of the sarpanches to the indirect election. In Orissa, they changed over from indirect to direct election. Similarly, Haryana changed over from indirect to direct election in 1978 and Punjab from direct to indirect election of the sarpanches. Similar trend of change from direct to indirect and from indirect to direct election of this institution has been followed by the rest of the states. Thus, these undesirable frequent changes have further distorted the image of the panchayati raj. However, the Committee on Panchayati Raj Elections favoured the direct election.

35. Ibid.
Similar distortions have been noticed in the field of functional autonomy of the panchayati raj institutions. An investigation into the legislation on democratic decentralisation and its implementation in various states clearly reveals that the original purpose of decentralisation has neither been honestly tried nor achieved by them. In spite of all the cry and effort for local autonomy and 'gram swaraj' during the freedom Movement' and even after the attainment of independence, almost all statutes pertaining to the panchayati raj system in different states, appear to have laid more emphasis on 'regulatory functions' and far less on 'developmental functions'. These institutions have everywhere been assigned more of the former type of duties, perhaps for the reason that they are 'safe' by nature. As regards developmental functions which involve an element of discretion and autonomy, these have been largely denied to them. The experience of most of the states, observes Ham Reddy, "seems to be that these bodies have not been given enough freedom to function". It has been further noticed that whatever little discretion or autonomy had been granted to them in the initial flush of enthusiasm had been jealously curbed by the state Government under one pretext or the other. Ultimately the panchayati raj institutions were reduced to mere skeletons. These institutions were forced to operate under various types of negative and excessive constraints or controls.

36. Ibid., p.15.
Another aspect of this distortion is the growing trend of (what is described) the 'provincialisation' of the key posts of these institutions. To name a few of them — panchayat secretaries, executive officers, accountants, health officials, extension officers, etc. Under the new pattern all these officials are deputed by the state governments to work in these institutions. Obviously, the latter do not have any control over them. Moreover, they would act as the secret agents of their 'masters' to the determinant of the panchayati raj institutions.

In recent years some efforts have been made to put the panchayati raj institutions on their original plane. But these scattered efforts to change the 'control mechanism' of the system in favour of greater autonomy to it did not deliver the goods. In fact, the problem is that beyond the acceptance of local autonomy there existed a well-entrenched resistance to any radical change of balance of power in favour of panchayati raj institutions. Therefore, nothing fruitful was done. Consequently, these institutions could not be developed as the autonomous units of democratic decentralization and equip them with adequate power and authority to enable them to fulfill the objectives of grass-root democracy and development. As a result, the entire plan of democratic decentralization was frustrated to a great extent. And an overall examination and investigation of the legislations on the subject in various states clearly
shows that these institutions were not equipped with sufficient functional autonomy and whatever little autonomy had been delegated to them was taken back. Therefore, panchayati raj in India could not take the shape of village republics or concentric circles or oceanic circles as envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi.

Too stringent control and supervision mechanism as developed by the State Governments manifests itself in various forms. In some states (such as Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, etc.) the State Governments reserve the right to sanction the budgets of the zila parishads. Then there is the administrative power given to various officials to suspend the resolutions passed by panchayati raj institutions. Most of the states vest this power in the Collector or the Commissioner or Deputy Commissioner or District Magistrate. Similarly, the State Government itself or acting through its officials can remove the office-bearers of the panchayati raj institutions including their presiding heads. And, then, as noted earlier, the State Governments are empowered to dissolve or supersede them. In the context of such wide powers still in the hands of the State Government officials, one wonders if at all democratic decentralization is really an advance over the position held by these institutions during the much maligned British raj!

While recounting the misfortunes of the panchayati raj institutions, the dysfunctional role of the bureaucracy (at all levels) glaringly comes to the mind. The initial enthusiasm with which they were developed, made them grow
into politically active tiny heads of democracy, at the grass-root level. The political overtones that they thus acquired made them an eye-sore for the higher level political elite. Apprehending a danger at the hands of the panchayati raj leaders, the former initiated a silent but systematic campaign to nip 'the evil in the bud'. That provided a long-awaited opportunity to the bureaucracy to suppress them with its heavy hand. As a result, the panchayati raj came to be bureaucratised in no time. One after the other, these institutions were superseded and their control was passed on to the local or sub-divisional level bureaucracy. Elections were not only postponed time and again, but even altogether forgotten, as mentioned above. This was more true of the panchayat sanitis and zila parishads which were the seats of more substantial powers. As regards their functions, they had already been divested off them. Thus, the finely-woven and ambitiously designed panchayati raj structure came to be reduced to an extension agency of the state and district level bureaucracy in no time. Accordingly, panchayati raj was hamstrung. The imaginative mind of Jawaharlal Nehru had apprehended a danger at the hands of the bureaucracy. He

38. Carl C. Taylor, Douglas Ensminger, et al., "India's Roots of Democracy: A Sociological Analysis of Rural India's Experience in Planned Development Since Independence" (Bombay: Orient Longmans, 1967), p. 579. They observe, "the inadequacies of Indian bureaucracy are not due to the fact that it is a bureaucracy, but due, to a considerable extent, to the fact that it carries too much baggage from the past."
had, therefore, warned them, saying: "Having given the
authority and power to them, you should not tamper with it
by official interference. Let them make mistakes and let
them suffer for these mistakes. The officials must only
be advisers; they must not be bosses." 39

The approach of the bureaucracy and the method of
their tackling the problems of the panchayati raj have been
very aptly described by the Asoka Mehta Committee. We quote
it, at some length, below:

"The officers would feel that they are primarily
accountable for results and financial proprieties
to the State Government. The officials knew no
better than to trust their own fraternity. They
would, on the one hand, therefore, be averse to
PRIs being entrusted with additional functions and
on the other would not easily get adjusted to
working under the supervision of elected represen-
tatives. The new developmental tasks and their load
also became such that the bureaucracy had to
commandeer all the available staff and, in the
process, withdrew what was available for the block.
Further, as a natural corollary of this pull for
withdrawal, the influence of the field bureaucracy
in decision-making waned with time and that of
secretariat or departmental heads increased. The
field bureaucracy was further handicapped because
the elected representatives also quite often failed
to own and work with them." 40

39. Jawaharlal Nehru, Address at the Annual Conference
of State Ministers' of Community Development and

40. The Asoka Mehta Committee Report on Panchayati Raj
Institutions, V. 3, pp. 5-6.
Lamenting over this development, Nageshwar Prasad remarks: "No wonder, therefore, that even after the introduction of these bodies at various levels, the pace of community development largely remains bureaucratised—a phenomenon against which the whole scheme of decentralization was designed". Thus, bureaucracy could not add much to the success of panchayati raj. Rather, it positively obstructed its growth.

The poor financial position of the panchayati raj, constitutes another weak spot. Right from its inception, repeated warnings have been issued to the government that unless they made bold efforts to decentralize to these institutions adequate financial resources, panchayati raj could not flourish at all. The reports of various committees that have gone into the study of the functioning of this system are replete with such warnings, observations and subsequent recommendations. But what we find today, is that like functions and powers, the financial resources in whatever little degree they had been passed on to them, were taken back one by one. The most glaring examples relate to the professions tax and the grants under the

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42. Refer to Asoka Mehta Committee Report, IX.1.1.,p.102. Committee observed: "It is generally the view that part of the inability of the Panchayati Raj institutions to come upto the expectation lay in their weak financial resources".

See also Government of India, Report of the Study Team on Panchayati Raj Finances-1963, Part I, [op. cit.], p.5.

See also Balvant Ray Mehta Committee Report, 2.21, p.12.

See also Naik Committee Report on Democratic Decentralization, [op. cit.], p.127.
Community Development Programme. The latter gradually dwindled with the conclusion of a Programme and subsequently the effort was made to provide alternative sources of revenue. It will be wrong to apportion the entire blame to the government. These institutions and more particularly their leaders are also responsible for the deplorable state of affairs in which these institutions find themselves today. No elected leader wanted to levy tax and much less to collect the existing ones, simply for the reason that he would grow politically unpopular. Unfortunately, this has become a general psychology of the people all over the country. Panchayati raj institutions are no exception to it. Today the position is that some of these institutions depend upon the government even for the payment of salaries to their staff. The fate of an institution which cannot support itself can be well imagined.

Another weak point (perhaps the weakest) in the panchayati raj, is the awfully poor development of the institution of Gram Sabha. It has suffered from the neglect and contempt of both the government and the people.

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The Committee observed: "It is not difficult to observe that it has developed a number of weaknesses ....... Gram Sabha ....... do not seem to have any way influenced the decisions of the Village Panchayat".
The tragedy of the whole show is that panchayati raj did not accord any importance to this institution. Ironically Maharashtra pattern does not even provide for this institution. The Government of India had constituted a Study Team on the Position of Gram Sabha to look into the causes of its poor development and to recommend measures to strengthen it. But even the valuable report of that Team could not make any dent either in the apathy of the people or in the contempt-ridden attitude of the Government. The result is that what constituted the base of the Gandhian scheme of democratic decentralization, has been completely neglected to the extent of its non-existence.

Yet another aspect of the panchayati raj which needs to be highlighted here is that these institutions have also become a paradise for political parties and for local factions and groupism. Objectively speaking, there is nothing wrong in it, for where there is power, there must be party-politics and groupism. Moreover, these things cannot be avoided particularly when parliamentary democracy functions at the top echelons. But viewing the situation from the Gandhian perspectives, this development is not a very healthy trend. But, the question arises: how can either parties or local factions be kept out of the arena of power politics? Those who plead for their non-interference (and there is no dearth of such people in the country) do not seem
to be taking a realistic view of the situation. The Aoka Mehta Committee was probably the first to have pleaded for an active involvement of the political parties in the elections of the panchayati raj institutions. Their jumping into the fray of local politics will at least strengthen the politics from the Gram Sabha to the Lok Sabha.

To conclude, it may be observed that the country has not been able to evolve a satisfactory democratic decentralized plan for more than 35 years. The experience of panchayati raj has not been uniform throughout the country, as each state adopted a different model more suitable to its own politico-administrative conditions in the garb of local circumstances. In a few states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, these institutions took some roots by making some significant impact on the people and gathered momentum, while in others, these remained in an embryonic stage and all energies were being exhausted simply to keep them alive and that too in name only. Moreover, the panchayati raj has been a subject of controversy ever since the dawn of independence. The Constitution-makers ignored its incorporation in the Constitution, politicians exploited it in the name of Gandhi and democratic decentralization, academicians interpreted and evaluated their intellectual sophistication by presenting it in their own ideological kaleido-scopes, people lacked their interest, initiative, cooperation, and participation in
its implementation process and the officials and non-officials showed their indifferent attitude towards it. Finally, the government both at the Centre and State levels played hide and seek, at times creating an illusion and a revolution of consciousness.