PREFACE

It took over four decades for the nation to realise that, sustainable democratic decentralisation is not possible in the absence of some kind of constitutional status to local bodies. The Panchayati Raj movement that was launched with much funfare in the country in 1958 failed to achieve the desired results. Successive governments have appointed committees and commissions for reforming these grassroot level institutions and consequential legislation has been enacted. But the problem for rural poverty, unemployment and health hazards still loom very large on the socio-political and economic horizon of India. The nation witnessed a landmark development in the annals of Indian democracy and federal policy when 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992, created the third-tier of democratic government of India at the rural local level. The Act not only bestowed “Constitutional Status” upon the Panchayati Raj Institutions but also breathed a new life and vitality into these structures of local democracy by constitutionally ordaining devolution of powers, functions, responsibility and resources by State Government to the Panchayati Raj Institutions. They also paved the way for employment of women, weaker sections, the poor and the disorganised in the society. Above all, they opened the floodgates
for active participation of people in the grassroots democracy on the one hand and decision making in the process of rural development policy and administration on the other.

In view of the above observation, it was felt necessary to make an objective academic study of the Panchayati Raj Institutions of South Goa district consequent upon the enactment of new Panchayati Raj legislation in Goa entitled, the “The Goa Panchayati Raj Act, 1994” which came into force in 1997 with the constitution of various new bodies. This is an empirical study looking into the relevant and multi-farious dimensions of the working of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in South Goa district. Hopefully, this thesis can generate new data and new ideas about rural local Self-government Institutions in South Goa district. This point of focus and frame of reference should make this a fruitful study.

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(S. V. Katageri).