CHAPTER IV
DECENTRALISED PLANNING AND AREA DEVELOPMENT
IN INDIA AND KARNATAKA
Decentralised planning

The need for effective steps to secure the decentralised planning in India was recognised almost since the inception of planning era. However the systematic attempt towards it began after many years. Generally in all the Five Year Plan documents, although micro-spatial planning with three tier set up has been envisaged with equal importance of people's participation, in practice "planning machinery has failed to grapple with the micro-level planning with multi-layers of planning machinery". The planning technique was basically that of centralised or planning from above or top-down type following the Soviet planning system. During 1977-78, there was a shift and the technique of decentralised planning of French type was followed which was again replaced in 1980 by centralised type of planning. The Seventh Plan also laid considerable emphasis on decentralised planning. Now in the Eighth Plan it appears that "the core centralised technique will be replaced by a decentralised pattern though it is not clear till now how far the decentralisation will proceed or what form it will take. But talks are going on for creating

district growth centres as a strategy for growth from below-a new pattern of micro-level economic development and growth capable of continuously lifting people from under poverty line".2

The decentralised planning has been accepted as an essential ingredient or component of an effective planning mechanism and as a grand panacea for all our economic ills and in recent years this subject has been engaging the serious attention of planners and policy makers. "Decentralisation, whatever form it takes, is inevitable and necessary to ensure that planning is done at the grass root level, and that justice is met out promptly and immediately, and that fruits of development reach all, particularly the deprived sections of the rural masses. In pursuit of these objectives the role of elites and the previledged is to organise and conscientise the people". 3

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2. Sen, R.K., "Decentralised Planning and Primary Health Care in LDCS with Reference to India", The Indian Economic Association, Conference Number, 1988, p. 64.

According to V.M. Rao, "decentralised planning has to be a skillful blend of the conventional techno-economic models of planning focussed on resources with the political economy perspectives of the impact of development processes on social structure and relations. This is particularly true of the planning strategy and approaches for poverty eradication. Also decentralised planning to be effective, has to be an integral part of a multi-level planning system, linking the micro with the macro to activate the trickling down and percolation processes, helping the growth impulses to spread out widely and evenly reaching all areas and strata including the peripheris". Stressing the need for planning from below and on the spatial aspect of decentralisation D.M. Nanjundappa writes "planning for development becomes fragmentary or unintegrated if it lacks spatial dimension. A national plan has to be formulated through a hierarchy of integrated regional or sub-regional or district or state plans. In their preparation due consideration is to be given to regional or local problems of areas varying widely in land form and use, and their potentials, population

problems, resources, infrastructures and processing needs. If this is accomplished, the plans of different areas can then be integrated into a mutually consistent state plan.\(^5\) He further writes, "area plans make the people to identify the programmes meant for their locality and this would lend to be concentrating of the programmes and invoking of necessary co-operation for the people in implementation.\(^6\) Therefore, there should be adequate degree of people's participation in any scheme of decentralised planning. In a real sense this would imply a complete change in the planning set-up from the prevailing bureaucratic framework to a participative one and also implies handing over planning functions to Panchayati Raj institutions.

Local government is closer to the people than the state or the central government. Active involvement of Panchayats in the planning process will result in better and more efficient planning because the people at local level - have a better perception of their needs; better awareness of possible linkages of different activities within the village.


\(^6\) Ibid., p. 70.
and between neighbouring villages; will be specifically useful at the stage of formulation of objectives and laying down of priorities of the plan and making them attuned to the felt needs and problems of the people; will be useful in identification, formulation, selection and location of scheme of local importance in monitoring and evaluation of projects/programmes. Thus Panchayat Raj institutions offer an institutional base for planning from below.

**Integrated area development**

It is a fact that economic development does not take place uniformly in all the areas or regions of the country for the reasons such as social, economic, political, cultural and so on. There exist both developed and backward areas. The existence of this problem of dualism on the one hand and the need for reducing economic and social disparities on the other have called for integration of sectoral and spatial dimensions in the planning process. So far, the spatial dimension of planning was relegated to the background in both the national and state level planning focusing attention only on sectoral dimension. If the spatial aspect is also introduced in the process of planning

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and implementation, greater economic and social benefits can be expected and more even spread of development can be achieved. This has lead to the importance of spatial plan or integrated area development plan.

The concept of integrated area of regional development in its real scientific meaning has gained importance only during recent years. The planning for integrated area development requires the integration of functional and spatial aspects of development which are themselves interrelated. Functional integration refers to the integration of all economic and social activities which influence the life of the people. Spatial integration was a neglected aspect so far. The socio-economic activities and the interrelationships among these activities depend a great deal on where they are located.

8. Sarma, P.V. and Mohankumar, K.V., have pointed out three dimensions of integrated area development, i.e., (1) Spatial integration which refers to the integration of spatial units with each other and also with the higher level planning units, (2) Functional integration which refers to the identification of service centres and delineation of their service areas which are viable enough to support the minimum essential services within the reach of the development villages, and (3) Planning for development of the region after identifying the resource potential. See their study, "Planning for Integrated Area Development Plan - A Case Study of Nuzvid Block, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh" in Munirthna Naidu, K., (ed), Area Plan for Regional Development, Inter-India Publications, New Delhi., 1984, p. 55.
The spatial relationships among existing activities exhibit a definite pattern in the dispersal or concentration of activities in space. The location of a specific function in relation to other functions depends on various factors such as general level of development, demand for and supply of specific functions, accessibility of these functions in terms of communication, time and distance of travel, income of the people, cost of procuring these functions and so on. Because of one or a combination of such factors much of our rural areas are deprived of many basic minimum needs or amenities of life. There are some areas on the other hand, where such functions are concentrated due to similar reasons.

The area of regional development requires the understanding of functional interrelations in space because, the appropriate location of the proposed new activities or functions may start a chain reaction of development with far reaching activities.

Thus the integrated area development consists of "appropriate location of social and economic activities"
over a physical space for the balanced development of a region. Each and every settlement cannot possess each and every function or facility or service and therefore the idea of an appropriate location is by definition selective. Location theorists have observed that a hierarchy of settlements will emerge on the basis of the number of functions of different orders, their specialisation and the area served by a settlement. Therefore all these different order functions need to be located in appropriate places and the appropriate location of these functions will be necessarily in the central place itself.

In view of the meagre financial resources it is not possible to provide all services and all developmental programmes to all settlements. Therefore, under the present day economic conditions the idea of selective and appropriate location is most relevant. Further we need quick returns from all our present investments to build up

our capital stock for future investments. Hence, in any future investments selectivity is our guiding principle.

Integrated area development is based not only on the idea of selectivity but also on the idea of decentralisation. Decentralisation of development is seen at a local level between the rich (developed) and the poor (backward) areas. As the areas away from the importat centres of economic activity may remain permanently backward some sort of inducement for growth in the form of overheads and infrastructures is necessary in these backward areas. Thus, "the concept of integrated area development suggests a framework for decentralising economic and social activities by locating specific functions in appropriate places. The net work thus created provides a meaningful infrastructure which can attract and sustain a diversified but a growing economy".

The best method which can be used to promote integrated area development in our rural areas is growth centres.

11. Ibid., p. 3.
Growth centres constitute an essential component of an area development plan because they act as substitute for urban centres by minimising the problems of growing urbanisation, serve as a nuclei of development and points of social investments, offer appropriate points for location and diversification of industries and serve as suitable media for diffusion of technology. According to Nanjundappa, "While there are substantial achievements to the credit of planned development, we cannot ignore the fact that there is an uneven spread of infrastructural facilities, concentration of industrial development in a few centres and unhealthy growth of urban areas with its attendant evils. The consequence is the failure in exploiting the resource potentiality of various regions and in carrying the benefits of development to larger sections of the community and to lagging regions. This situation calls for investment and location decisions in such a way that limited available resources can generate maximum spread effects and growth impulses. Formulation of location specific programmes require identification of areas which need development of infrastructural facilities of various orders and which can

develop into a dynamic agricultural industrial complex. It is in this context that Growth Centres assume significance.  

The growth centre concept follows a middle course between concentration and dispersal and the theory favours potentially viable developing centres to meet the socio-economic needs of a group of villages. There are many advantages of growth centre approach. They are 1) By selective investment a faster regional economic growth can be achieved 2) Public investment on infrastructure can be saved because the infrastructure in growth centre is served by a cluster of villages. 3) Growth impulses can be disseminated throughout by the decentralised concentration of investments and 4) It is possible to provide modern amenities.


The community development programme which started on October 2, 1952 was a well worked out programme. It went on for nearly two decades covering the entire rural India with block as its unit. It's aim was to achieve rural development through people's participation and initiative; to give the 'right to live' to India's teeming millions; and to provide better, richer and fuller life to the village people. "The short term objective of the scheme was to develop basic amenities and institutional framework and the long term objective was to attain self-sufficiency in matters of basic needs".  

The community development programme embodied a multi-purpose programme of rural development consisting of agricultural, animal husbandry, minor irrigation, co-operative rural industries and social education. "The central idea of community development is that community itself recognises and identifies its problems, seeks and formulate solutions to them through discussion, works out and executes these solutions through conjoint effort and in materials of basic needs".  

the process educate itself and builds up self-confidence. This may be assisted by external agency - governmental or otherwise, but community development is what the community does for itself. Thus the basic principles on which the community development programme stress were 1) self-help, 2) co-operation, 3) receptiveness to new ideas and techniques, and 4) balanced development of different sectors of rural economy. Both the community and development were to proceed hand in hand.

16. Dubhashi, P.R., Essays in Development Administration, Archives, New Delhi, 1986, p. 289. For details also see Puttaswamaiah, K., ibid., pp.1114-1120.

17. The concept of community development has often been confused with other concepts, ideas or activities. Community development is not an extension because the former is a method and the latter is an agency. Both can be combined and united but extension is not a substitute for community development. Community development is not an area development. Because 'area' which is a geographical concept includes natural as well as human resources and can be developed by a government agency. On the other hand, 'community' is a sociological concept. Community development is not even Panchayati Raj although used synonymously because the latter is an institutional base for the community development. Community development and rural development are also not synonymous because community should consider all the nodal factors in social and economic life. Each community existing in villages, towns and cities has its own organisation and process or growth. Therefore, "community and community development can exist irrespective of a particular extension agency, specific rural development programme or the Panchayati Raj institutions". See Dubhashi, P.R., op.cit. p. 291.
Both the administrators and the people at large evinced great enthusiasm in the initial years of community development. People voluntarily did shramadan in the local developmental projects. Thus the introduction of community development was an epoch making event of far reaching importance in rural India and high hopes were pinned on it.

After a decade of euphoria the programme lost its original elan. People lost all their enthusiasm and the programme lost its relevance in the context of the new challenges and problems. There are several reasons for its failure. It failed to initiate or appreciate the dynamics of development and it was static. The programme “was identified with a stereo-type scheme with stereo-type of budget implemented in a mechanical manner. The tyranny of targets and allocation of funds was such that the programme ceased to be live programme organically connected with the ends and objects of economic development and social change.” The programme did not use the technique and concepts of scientific planning at the block and district level because of the absence of its connection with the ultimate objectives of mobilisation of local resources and area

18. See for details Dubhashi, P.R., op.cit., pp. 297-299.
19. Dubhashi, P.R., ibid., pp. 297-298.
development. "Its schematic approach kept away from such concepts as hierarchy of growth centres or nodal points, each linked up with clusters of village communities". It failed to bring about any significant degree of involvement of the people in rural development and thought of community as a whole without realising that it was broken up into various social and economic stratification. Thus "through the years, the soul of community development has been smothered by layers and layers of verbiage, routine rituals, meaningless jargon and stereo-type schemes and designs, schematic patterns of budgeting and staffing, reviews of financial allocations and utilisations have got the better of the basic objectives of community development. or perhaps in the process of changing policies, there has been a periodic dislodgement of one set of objectives and priorities by another, with the result that the central purpose and focus of community development has been shrouded in the welter of confusion. First the emphasis was on construction of local works (brick and mortar programme) than on agriculture and still later on establishment of Panchayati Raj".

20. Dubhashi, P.R., op.cit., p. 299.
21. Ibid., p. 289.
The blocks which were considered as the units of development and defined at national level were not revenue units and also not based on a scientific study of micro level zones of influence. The headquarters of these blocks which were selected for administrative convenience or under local pressure were often not the functionally central places of the areas. Thus, without doubt, the artificially delineated boundaries of the blocks have failed to harness local productive forces to the maximum extent.22

The community development programme recognised the functional integration of a region and omitted the spatial integration because of which several deficiencies have emerged in the programme. The urban and rural areas were totally compartmentalised and the blocks were defined to be outside the urban centres and vice versa. The programme was also committed to the development of every village separately on the assumption that "the revenue village as it exists on the map was coterminous with the rural community".23 The economic ties interlink our villages with each other and therefore a cluster of villages with a large village at the centre as one community has been considered as realistic.24

23. Ibid.
24. Ibid.
An answer to the aforesaid deficiencies and problems was provided by Mehta Committee which recommended the establishment of three tier system of rural local government i.e., Panchayati Raj institutions and devolution of development and decentralisation of the administrative machinery. After a decade of working, these institutions fell into a doldrum. They introduced politics and political tension in the administration and the programme, and they catered to the demands of the dominant class and caste groups.

In order to revitalise the community development programme it is suggested that the Five Year Plans "must conceive of a new programme of community development to meet the new challenges of change. Such a new programme must be based on concepts of area development, scientific planning, survey and mobilisation of local resources and meaningful organic links with the overall objectives of planning and development". This meant a regional approach to planning and development of rural areas.

25. Dubhashi, P.R., op.cit., p. 299.
Planning for basic needs

The 'basic needs' has aroused considerable interest, discussion and debate in recent years in several developing countries. The term 'basic needs' means many things to many and there is no authoritative work which has both rigorously defined the concept and been universally accepted. What constitutes 'basic needs' is not precise and clear. However it is rightly said "the unequivocal answer is that the people should decide on the scope, content and priority of their own basic needs, or that a basic needs strategy includes mass participation of the people both in defining basic needs and in the decision taken to meet basic needs. It is acknowledged that it is not obvious how this should be done but that there must be a mechanism introduced into the planning process through which representatives of organised groups choose basic needs".28

26. In the developing countries the concern for the persisting problems of poverty, unemployment, coupled with low productivity has given rise to the concern for meeting the basic needs. However, the Indian planning in the sixties has made use of the notion of minimum needs.


28. Ibid., p. 5.
Therefore, it is better to define the concept in terms of a core set of needs. The United Nations has listed the following items as basic needs which should go into the make up of a minimum standard of living. They are: health including demographic conditions; food and nutrition; education including literacy and skills; conditions of work; employment situation; aggregate consumption and savings; transportation; housing including household facilities; clothing; recreational entertainment; social security; human freedom. According to Aziz Khan the components of a core set of basic needs are 1) food, 2) clothing, 3) shelter, 4) health, 5) education, 6) drinking water and 7) contraception.

Michael Hopkins and Rolph van Der Hoeven, opine that "there can be no unanimous agreement on what constitutes a set of basic needs. It is clear that in the end it is up to the people themselves to identify their needs and attempt...


to influence their government to allow them to meet them within a reasonable time". According to them "any core set of basic needs should include a list of items or components to which most reasonable people would agree. These would be 1) food and nutrition including drinking water, 2) shelter, 3) clothing, 4) health, 5) education: a knowledge of basic health and contraceptive services plus ability to read and write in order to participate in society; 6) non-material needs - participation of the people in decisions which affect them in order to bring about social justice and self-reliance".

India is the first country to include the programme of minimum (or basic) needs in its plan particularly in the Fifth and Sixth Five year plans. The objectives of India's National Minimum Needs Programme spelled out in the Fifth Five Year Plan are:

32. Constitution of India, in its Directive Principles of State Policy (Articles 41, 43, 45, 46, 47) states the concern for provisions of national minimum level of living.
1. The provision of facilities for elementary education for children up to the age of 14 years at the nearest possible places to their homes.

2. Ensuring in all areas a minimum uniform availability of public health facilities which would include preventive medicines, nutrition and adequate arrangements for referring serious cases.

3. To ensure the supply of drinking water to villages suffering from chronic scarcity or having unsafe sources of water.

4. Provision of all weather roads to all villages having a population of 1,500 persons or more.

5. Provision of developed home sites for landless labour in rural areas (100 sq. feet per family).


7. Spread of electrification to cover 30 to 40 per cent of the rural population.

8. Nutritional assistance to special groups.

The important advantages which can be noticed in these objectives are that i) it would be more viable to combine
the most essential social services into a whole than treating them separately, ii) there would be a reversal of the trend of 'over-urbanisation' through the physical convergence of facilities at growth centres.34

The Sixth Five Year Plan offered a Revised Minimum Needs Programme which differs from the Minimum Needs Programme of Fifth Five Year Plan only in terms of norms. The nine items of basic needs are same, namely: elementary education, adult education, rural health, rural water supply, rural roads, rural electrification, houses for landless rural labour households, environment improvement of urban slums, and nutrition programme.

Decentralised local level planning or area development planning is an important factor in planning for basic needs. The basic needs requires planning at grass root level which is possible through democratic decentralisation or active involvement of panchayats - village or mandal - which offers the institutional base for planning for basic needs.

Democratic decentralisation

According to the Longman New Universal Dictionary, "decentralisation" means "distribution of functions and powers from a Central authority to regional authority". Decentralisation of political and economic power is essential in a democracy, because the needs of vast multitudes of people cannot be realised or fulfilled by a few centres of power. Democratic decentralisation not only means devolution or decentralisation of power to a regional or local authority but it also comprises devolution of responsibilities - both financial or fiscal discipline and protecting and safeguarding the interests of the weaker sections of the society.

Thus democratic decentralisation is a process whereby the government divests itself completely of certain duties, powers, responsibilities and resources, and devolves them on some authority - not to bureaucrats but to an elected body or group of elected representatives.

Democracy is all about local self-government as considered by political theorists and ordinary citizens alike. The local self-government is all about the participation of people in running the affairs of state, in decisions concerning one's immediate environment or one's own local community or village. This local self-government is what we term as Panchayat Raj in our country.

"Panchayati Raj essentially means a body of five (panch) members\(^{36}\) who were elected or chosen by the people in the villages and were accepted as the leaders who could guide all socio-economic activities of the village and would also be the arbitration and a judicial tribunal in matters of any dispute among the members of the community. In short, the Panchayat became the democratic self-governing institution of a village ... Thus, for all practical purposes, the Panchayat was a body that regulated the life of the community living in a village\(^{37}\). The establishment of Panchayati Raj institutions is essentially conceived as a means of providing certain amount of democracy at grass root

\(^{36}\) It can not be stated with certainty as to why number five is used and at any time there has been no fixity at all with regard to the number of persons. See for details, Jathar, R.V., Evolution of Panchayat Raj in India, Institute of Economic Research, Publication No.2, Dharwad, 1964, p. 4.

levels giving the people a sense of involvement in the making of decisions or programmes of development. They are the nuclei of planning and form the basic unit of rural administration.

Evolution of Panchayat Raj institutions

Since ancient times the Panchayats in our country have been the pulse beat of our democracy and they were the custodians of country's village corporate life. The history and growth of these Panchayats can be traced back to the hoary past. In the Vedic age the village functionary (a respectable official) or village head was called Gramini.\(^3\) In the great epics of Ramayan and Mahabharat also the explicit mention of the village institutions where Gramini "was responsible for collecting the state dues, keeping village records, settling disputes, controlling crime, and negotiating on behalf of the village".\(^3\) The evidence of village administration is also found in Jatak tales, Kautilya's Arthashastra, Gupta empire, Hindu Law Givers of the Smriti period. The various dynasties which ruled India

\(^3\) Jathar, R.V., op.cit., p. 2.

\(^3\) See for details Jain, S.C., Community Development and Panchayat Raj in India, Allied, Bombay, 1967, p. 78.
upto Mughuls did not disturb this convenient arrangement. During the period of Mughul emperors the solidarity of Panchayat Government and the village community was weakened and gradually Panchayats in their old form became ineffective and practically disappeared by the middle of the 19th century. The ancient village autonomy received a final death blow with the establishment of British rule in India and all the powers and responsibilities were withdrawn from the people.

The introduction of the famous Resolution of the liberal Viceroy Lord Ripon in 1882 is an important land mark in the sphere of rural local self-government which gave a definite lead to the advancement of village institutions. But the reactionary Viceroy Lord Curzen set a naught to the little progress made by the village institutions, towards the end of 19th century. The Royal Commission on Decentralisation of 1907 recommended to grant some powers to Panchayats to deal with the day-to-day needs of the villagers which remained only on paper. Several Village Panchayats Acts were passed for the establishment of village panchayats in different states after the Government of India's Resolution of 1918. The period of Provincial Autonomy (1937-46) was a period of set-back and reaction to the rural local self-government because of the deepening shadow of the World War.
The constitutional recognition

We have seen that during the British regime our country witnessed ups and downs in the implementation of Panchayat Raj institutions. Unfortunately, there was no serious thought given to restructuring the panchayat institutions and the framers of the Constitution in the beginning did not attach much attention to it. When this was brought to the notice of Mahatma Gandhi he remarked, "It is certainly an omission. It demands immediate attention if our independence is to really reflect the people's aspirations". Ultimately the Constituent Assembly incorporated two important Directive Principles of State Policy in Part IV of the Constitution of India. Article 38(1) stipulates, "The State shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as efficiently as it may, a social order in which justice - social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of national life". Article 40 adumbrates the establishment of panchayats in the country side. It obligates "the State to take steps to organise Village Panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them

to function as units of self-government. "This was really an integral part of the concept of the Poorna Swaraj and Gram Swaraj as being two integrally inter-related concepts. Mahatma Gandhi's concept of Poorna Swaraj meant several levels of autonomous development of local communities. It meant also that there has to be growth and development of the individual of the local community in every walk of life." 41

The Government of India as a matter of fact, instead of going in for establishing 'Panchayati Raj' went in for experimenting with the Community Development Programmes promoted by American advisors which started on 2nd October, 1952. This experiment continued for quite a long period in the restructuring of rural society. It was realised that the upliftment of the weaker sections of the people is not possible without integrated rural development programmes. The Second Five Year Plan aimed at formulating National Extension Service and Community Development Programmes instead of establishing Panchayati Raj institutions as units of Government.

Balvantray Mehta Committee

In January 1957, i.e., after seven years after the inauguration of the Constitution, a Study Team was appointed under the Chairmanship of Shri Balvantray Mehta to study and report on Community Development Projects and National Extension Service with a view to "economy and efficiency" and for the assessment of the extent to which the movement has succeeded in utilising local initiatives and in creating institutions to ensure continuity in the process of improving economic and social conditions in rural areas. The Committee submitted its report on 24th November 1957. It suggested about the urgent and immediate requirement of the decentralisation of responsibility, resources and power to levels below the state. The Team offered two broad directional thrusts:

1) For the effective implementation of the development programme, there should be administrative decentralisation and that the decentralised administrative system shall be under the control of elected bodies.

42. For details of the Study and Report of Balvantray Mehta Committee 1957, see Kurukshetra, XXXVII, No.5, February 1989, pp. 8-17.


44. Ibid, pp. 2-3.
2) The basic unit of democratic decentralisation should be located at the block/samiti level. The Team recommended three tier Panchayati Raj system - Gram Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samiti at Block level and Zilla Prishad at district level. Most of the country was covered with Panchayat Raj institutions, in succeeding decade based on the broad suggestions of the Balvantray Mehta report.

Ashok Mehta Committee

A thirteen members Committee to inquire into the working of the Panchayat Raj institutions, and to suggest measures to strengthen them, so as to enable a decentralised system of planning and development to be effective was appointed on 12th December 1977 with Shri Ashok Mehta as its Chairman. The Committee made an extensive study of the situation consulting a large number of experts. It submitted its report on 21st August 1978 making certain revolutionary recommendations statutory provision of assured financial resources at the village, block and district levels along with control of the governmental machinery to implement the programmes.

The Committee recommended for two tier system - Zilla Parishad at district level and Mandal Panchayat at Mandal level. At block level the Committee recommended for conversion of the Panchayat Samithi into non-statutory executive committees of Zilla Parishad.

The Committee suggested for the indirect election of the President of the Zilla Parishad and as per the decisions of the state, the President of the Mandal Panchayat may be directly elected or indirectly elected. The term of all the elected tiers should be four years and recommended for simultaneous and regular election of all these bodies. The Committee gave more importance to the role played by the Grama Sabha in activating the democratic process at the grass root level.

The Committee recommended for the transfer of all development functions of the states to the Zilla Parishad. Rural development programmes should receive priority and this is necessary in order to increase employment opportunities and alleviate poverty. It also recommended about the recovery of the revenues of the Panchayats.

The Committee suggested that the Mandal Panchayats would have to be suitably integrated with 'growth centre'.
They would have to take the necessary decisions concerning marketing, input supplies, credit and servicing and welfare requirements in association with other organisations in this regard.

An institutional design was recommended by the Committee in the light of the developmental thrust and technical expertise required for planning and implementation of rural development programme and commented, "the inescapable compulsion is that the district be the first point for decentralisation, under popular supervision, below the State level". "District has come to be recognised as a viable administrative unit at which planning, co-ordination and resource allocation are feasible and technical expertise is available."

In 1979, at a meeting of the Chief Ministers, the Report of the Committee was examined and found that there was no need of any change and decided to continue with the present three tier system of Panchayat Raj.

World Conference on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development

Under the auspices of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the World Conference was held in 1979
on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development. It recommended "a programme of action which includes decentralisation of institutions and process of government decision making and delegation to institutions of local government, increasing responsibility for decision making in rural development activities, in particular the planning machinery and process within the framework of national policy, to enable people's participation in the planning, formulation and implementation of developmental activities and programmes relating to their regions or areas". 46

Working groups on block level planning and district planning

In order to examine the issues involved in planning at the district level and below, two expert groups 47 were constituted namely the Working Group on Block Level Planning headed by Prof. M.L. Dantwala, and Working Group on District Planning headed by Dr. C.H. Hanumantha Rao.


47. Ibid.
Various aspects of decentralised planning at block and district level were studied by these two Committees whose recommendations, by and large are similar. "Both groups have recommended that the basic decentralised planning function has to be done at the district level. The Expert Group on district planning has commended that the institutional framework for district planning should be a social instrument of decision making which should be a happy blend of local autonomy, administrative capability and planning expertise. This Committee is in broad agreement with the main recommendations of the two expert groups". 48

G.V.K.Rao Committee

In order to review the existing administrative arrangements for rural development and poverty alleviation programmes and to recommend appropriate structural mechanisms to ensure that they are planned in an integrated manner and implemented effectively, the Planning Commission set up a twelve member Committee with Dr.G.V.K.Rao as its Chairman on March 25, 1985.

The Seventh Five Year Plan emphasised growth with social justice, and its development strategy aimed at a

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direct attack on the problems of poverty, unemployment and regional imbalances. According to the Committee, "The success of this depends on effective steps for the decentralisation of planning and development administration on the one hand and involvement and participation of the people in the formulation and implementation process through elected grass root level institutions, voluntary agencies as well as organisations of the poor. These will help in enhancing the effectiveness of the poverty alleviation programmes, in minimising leakages and in integration of these programmes with area development consistent with local needs. Decentralisation and democratisation are compulsions of rural development. There is no alternative to raising the awareness of the rural poor and activating and involving representative institutions from below (village panchayats, panchayat samitis, zilla parishads) in the planning and implementation of rural development programmes in an integrated manner for optimal use of resources and for closer monitoring. This is particularly emphasised in the context of special programmes of poverty alleviation and the provision of minimum needs". 49

The Committee therefore recommends significant decentralisation at district level and advocated that elections should be held regularly whenever it becomes due. It did not recommend for supersession of the local bodies except in extraordinary circumstances. It was of the opinion that all departments of development at the district level and below should be brought squarely under the Zilla Parishad. For the proper functioning of Zilla Parishad, the Committee suggested for the establishment of various Committees like - General Standing Committee, Finance and Audit Committee, Planning Committee, Anti-poverty Programme Committee, Agricultural and Animal Husbandry Committee, Public Works and Amenities Committee, Education Committee, Industries Committee, Industries Committee, Social Forestry Committee, and Social Justice Committee. "The Committee has also envisaged restoration of original concept of integrated development at the Block level which was conceived for the Community Development Programme and providing administrative leadership at this level higher than prevalent at present. The Committee also recommends that there should be a directly elected body, say the Panchayat Samiti, to be responsible for planning and implementation of developmental schemes under the guidance of the Zilla Parishad".  

The Committee recommends for consideration of constituting Mandal Panchayat for group of villages with a population of 15,000 - 20,000 instead of the present Gram Panchayat. It also advocated for the constitution of Gram Sabha consisting of all adult members of the village and for its meeting at an interval of less than six months. The Chairman, in his absence the Vice-Chairman or Gram Panchayat member should preside over the Gram Sabha and identify the beneficiaries under the poverty alleviation programmes such as IRDP, NREP, RLEGPS, etc. It suggested also for involvement of voluntary agencies in developmental programmes in a large measure.

L.M.Singhvi Committee: 1986

In order to examine the present structure, arrangements and development of Panchayat Raj institutions in India and evaluate these institutions as a means of rural development in nation building an eight member Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr.L.M.Singhvi was appointed in June 1986.

The Committee considers the Gram Sabha as the embodiment of direct democracy and recommends for "village reorganisation in our country on the basis of relevant criteria which should take into account factors of identity, continuity, homogeneity, communications and techno-economic demographic and cultural factors".\(^{52}\)

According to the Committee's views "the Panchayat Raj institutions should become vehicles for homogenisation, secularisation and socialisation of national ethos".\(^{53}\)

The Committee suggested for the constitutional recognition of the local self-government, and recommends for prompt, regular, free, and fair elections to these bodies at the end of the specified terms.

As regards the internal resources, the Committee suggested a pattern of compulsory and optional levies of taxes and fees by Panchayat Raj institutions and further recommends that resources earmarked for various rural development and poverty alleviation programmes should be routed through these institutions.

\footnotesize{
53. Ibid, p. 44.
}
In respects of integrated administrative structures for planning and development the Committee concurs broadly with the recommendations made by G.V.K. Rao Committee. It also recommended for establishment of Nyaya Panchayats for a cluster of villages to perform the functions of mediation and conciliation in addition to adjudication.

Thus, "the introduction of Panchayat Raj in the rural areas of India is an epoch making event of far reaching importance in the fast moving, momentous and revolutionary period after Independence".54

Statewise coverage of Panchayat Raj Institutions

As it is obligatory on the part of the state, as per Article 40 of the Constitution of India, to establish village republics, various Panchayat Acts were enacted by the state Government to fulfill this constitutional obligation. The Government of India constituted several committees to study and rejuvenate these grassroots institutions. Further a large part of the country was covered on the basis of the recommendations of Balwantray Mehta Committee.

The comparative analysis of the statewise details of Panchayat Raj institutions is shown in Table Nos. 11 and 12. We can see that the three-tier arrangement, in general, is existing in the country Gram or Gaon Panchayat at village level, Panchayat Samiti or Taluk Panchayat at block or taluk level,55 and Zilla Parishad or District Panchayat at district level. Table 11 shows the distribution of states according to the existence of various tiers of these bodies.

Thus it is found that the Panchayat Raj institutions have got universal coverage but there is no uniformity or homogeneity in the system. The development of these local bodies witnessed ups and downs during the last many years. In the early stage there was a lot of fanfare and enthusiasm, feeling of elation about these institutions. In the second stage there was certain disillusionment. There was more and more emphasis on these local bodies as a matter of administrative convenience only, and because of this "over the years Panchayat Raj institutions became victims of infighting, victim of self-seeking and victims of fragmentation of a fractured consciousness in respect of the

55. In Gujarat and Karnataka it is called Taluk Panchayat, and called as Panchayat Union in Tamil Nadu, Kshetra Samiti in Uttar Pradesh, Janpad Panchayat in Madhya Pradesh, Anchal Samiti in Arunachal Pradesh.
Table 11: Distribution of states/Union Territories according to the existence of various tiers of Panchayat Raj system in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>States/UTS having three tier system</th>
<th>States/UTS having two tier system</th>
<th>States/UTS having single tier system</th>
<th>States/UTS having traditional councils of village elders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>Jammu &amp; Kashmir</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>Lakshadweep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Nagaland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td></td>
<td>Goa, Daman &amp; Diu</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dadra &amp; Nagar Haveli</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pondicherry (only at block level)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chandigarh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 12: Statewise details of Panchayat Raj institutions in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SI No</th>
<th>Name of state</th>
<th>Size of institution</th>
<th>Mode of Mode of Designation</th>
<th>Average village per GP/PS per CD</th>
<th>Percentage of population covered</th>
<th>Last election held</th>
<th>Next election due</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Village 15-17</td>
<td>Direct President</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arunachal Pradesh</td>
<td>Village 15-17</td>
<td>Direct President</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>Village 1-15</td>
<td>Direct President</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>Village 9</td>
<td>Direct President</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Goa</td>
<td>Village 7-17</td>
<td>Direct President</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>Village 15-31</td>
<td>Direct President</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>Village 5-9</td>
<td>Direct President</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Himachal Pradesh</td>
<td>Village 7-11</td>
<td>Direct President</td>
<td>19550</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
- Statewise details include the name of the state, size of the institution, mode of election, designation of the head of the institution, average village per GP/PS per CD, percentage of population covered, last election held, and next election due.
- The table provides a comprehensive overview of various Panchayat Raj institutions in India across different states, highlighting the mode of election and the size of the institutions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>1) Mandal Panchayat</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>11-19</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Pradhan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>1) Panchayat</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>7-15</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>1) Panchayat</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Sarpanch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>1) Mandal Panchayat</td>
<td>Block</td>
<td>15-30</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Manipur</td>
<td>1) Gram Panchayat</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>7-15</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Sarpanch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Meghalaya</td>
<td>1) Mandal Panchayat</td>
<td>District</td>
<td>40-60</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mizoram</td>
<td>1) Village Council</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>President</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>1) Gram Panchayat</td>
<td>Village</td>
<td>11-25</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Sarpanch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2) Panchayat Samiti</td>
<td>Block</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Chairman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>State</td>
<td>Local Government Level</td>
<td>Head of the Body</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-------------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
<td>Direct Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Block</td>
<td>Indirect Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>Zila Parishad District</td>
<td>Indirect Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
<td>Direct Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Block</td>
<td>Indirect Pradhan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Zila Parishad District</td>
<td>Indirect Ilka Pramukh</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Sikkim</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
<td>Indirect Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
<td>Direct Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Block</td>
<td>Indirect Pradhan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Zila Parishad District</td>
<td>Indirect Ilka Pramukh</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
<td>Direct Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
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<td>Panchayat Samiti Block</td>
<td>Indirect Pradhan</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Zila Parishad District</td>
<td>Indirect Ilka Pramukh</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
<td>Direct Pradhan</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Block</td>
<td>Indirect Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Zila Parishad District</td>
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<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
<td>Direct Pradhan</td>
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<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Block</td>
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<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
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<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
<td>Direct Pradhan</td>
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<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Block</td>
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<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Zila Parishad District</td>
<td>Nominated Chairman</td>
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<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Panchayat Village</td>
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<td>24.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Panchayat Samiti Block</td>
<td>Indirect Chairman</td>
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<td>25.</td>
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<td>Nominated Chairman</td>
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<td>26.</td>
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<td>27.</td>
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<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>Tripura</td>
<td>Zila Parishad District</td>
<td>Nominated Chairman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The table above lists the names and positions of the heads of the local government bodies in various states in India.*
large goals of self-government and as being nothing but the battleground for local differences. They became ultimately nothing but an apparatus and that was their undoing. And in the third stage now there is again more interest in these institutions.

"The experience of the last four decades has shown that the Panchayat Raj system is moving downhill. In most of the states it has become moribund. There are so many reasons for the inactivity of these institutions as indicated by various research studies, Committees and Commissions: 1) There was a lack of interest on the part of state leaders because there was mutual suspicion between state level leadership and local leadership. Therefore the statelevel leadership was not sympathetic to the Panchayat Raj institutions. Thus there was a lack of mature, and experienced leadership. 2) The Panchayat Raj institutions had inadequate resources and in some cases there was underutilisation of resources, 3) There was the basic "lack of inputs of training, of ethos, of a spirit of working together, of a spirit of a self sacrifice, and of a spirit

56. Singhvi, L.N. Public Opinion is of utmost importance" op. cit., 13.

of consensual decision making". 58 4) In many states there was no regularity in holding elections to these institutions and in some states elections were not held twenty, fifteen, fourteen, eight ... years. Many state governments indiscriminately superseded the institutions. "The credibility of the system is destroyed and then it is felt that it is nothing but contrived power structure and not a real one, not a natural one, and credible one". 59 5) Other problems in the proper functioning of these institutions are apathy of citizens towards local problems; factions, partisanship, and intergroup adjustments; lack of technical competence of people orientation and inter-departmental co-ordination; structural overlapping of functions.

Thus, "the Panchayats from their hazy past had a chequered career, with so many ups and downs, blossoming in a few states while fading out or languishing in many other states. The history of Panchayats is full more of sorrow and tears and less of joy and smiles, especially during the British regime. For most of the time and in most of the states, Panchayats were either neglected, contemptuously treated or allowed to remain in hibernation. The reasons

for the Panchayati Raj institutions in not becoming the basic nursery of the democracy were varied and various, the main factors being that the state Governments, if not inimical, were, indifferent towards them. Regular elections for these grassroots bodies were not held, administrative and financial powers were not given to them and even conceptualisation, preparation and implementation of various local projects were not brought within the purview of these institutions thus leaving them in a bad shape. The process of building democracy from the village upwards was put in the reverse gear; the pyramid was turned topsy-turvy and placed in an inverted pedestal. This was the net result of unhealthy tendency of over-centralisation; the states putting on the mantle of masters and the Centre dictating the states. This reversal of democratic decentralisation cuts at the very root of the Panchayati Raj institutions". 60

60. Arora, V.P., "First Panchayat Raj sammelan A Resume" Kurukshetra, Vol. XXXVII, No. 6, op. cit., p. 34.
Local self government and Panchayat Raj institutions in Karnataka

Karnataka has a long tradition of local self government. It was very much prevalent in the state and the villages functioned as mini republics. In every village all important local, social and economic issues were discussed at a congregation of the heads of families. In Karnataka this tradition of village bodies was very strong.

The need for broadening the self-government in local matters was realised as early as in 1882-83. Accordingly, in 1883, the Draft Local Boards Regulation-Mysore Local Boards Regulation 1902 was prepared. But this Draft was approved by the Government of India in 1902, and in 1903 necessary rules were issued. Under the Rules eight District Boards (one each for a revenue district), 77 Taluk Boards (one each for a taluk or sub-taluk) were established. The Local Boards and Village Panchayats Act VI of 1918 provided for the establishment of separate self-governing bodies - village Panchayats with more powers for the first time for

rural areas in the state. In 1919 to start with, a village panchayat was established for each village or group of village with separate resources and a nominated chairman. A host of other Acts were enacted for the establishment of local boards and village panchayats in different Presidency areas. In the erstwhile Bombay Presidency local boards were governed under the Bombay Local Boards Act (VI of 1923) and the village panchayats were governed under the Bombay Village Panchayats Act (VI of 1933) which was amended in July 1949. The Local Funds Act 1871 constituted local boards and the village panchayats were governed under the village Panchayats Act XV of 1920 in the Madras Presidency Area. The enactment of Hyderabad District Boards Act and the Hyderabad Village Panchayats Act in 1941-42 marked the beginning of local self-governing institutions at the grassroot level in the erstwhile Hyderabad state which provided for more number of elected seats. The Village Panchayat Act 1940 was replaced by another Act in 1951 which provided for reorganisation and establishment of panchayats on the basis of adult suffrage. In Kodagu Area in accordance with the provisions of Coorg Act XI of 1900 the Kodagu District Board was constituted for the first time in 1901.
In the erstwhile Mysore state two Committees had been constituted namely - the Integration and Co-ordination Committee for Local Bodies, known as Venkatappa Committee and the Local Boards Enquiry Committee known as Chandrashekharaiah Committee. The Venkatappa Committee which presented its report on 12.6.1950 suggested a two-tier structure of local self-government, and the abolition of District Boards and constitution of taluk Boards. The Chandrashekharaiah Committee submitted its report on 28.8.1954 which proposed a three tier structure - the District Boards, the taluk Boards and the Village Panchayats. In view of the impending reorganisation of the states no tangible results were achieved.

However, after reorganisation of the states as elsewhere in the country and in pursuance of Balwantrai Mehta Committee Report of 1957, Karnataka also introduced the Panchayat Raj System earnestly. In 1959, a three-tier system was introduced and an act to consolidate and amend the laws relating to panchayats and to provide for the constitution of Taluk Development Boards and District Development Councils, The Karnataka Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act, 1959 (Karnataka Act No. 10 of 1959) was enacted.62

According to the above Act, a Village Panchayat was constituted for a revenue village or group of villages for a population ranging from 1,500 to 10,000. The Act also provided for constitution of a Town Panchayat for a village having population of not less than 5000 and an annual income of not less than Rs.10,000. Every Panchayat had elected members ranging from 11-19 who among themselves elected the Chairman and Vice-Chairman. The Act provided for two types of functions - obligatory and discretionary which were further classified into civic, regulatory and developmental. Obligatory functions included construction, repairs and maintenance and cleansing of rural roads, tanks, bridges, bunds; street lighting; sanitation; control of epidemics; planting and preservation of trees; promotion and development of economic and agricultural conditions; and the welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The discretionary functions covered a broad range of activity such as medical relief, markets, statistics; and the developmental functions such as co-operation, veterinary relief etc. Regulatory functions were quite extensive. Every village panchayat used to get 30 per cent of land revenue collection of the village and 10 per cent of the same as

discretionary grants. The other sources of finance were the levy of taxes and fees. The Secretary/Village Accountant was entrusted to discharge these functions.

The Act provided for constitution of Taluka Development Board for each taluk, excluding urban area, consisting of 15-19 elected members. The functions of these Taluka Development Boards were classified into obligatory and discretionary. The construction, repairs and maintenance of public roads, wells, tanks, minor irrigation works, primary school buildings, hospitals including veterinary, markets, rest houses, public health, organisation of agricultural and industrial exhibition, rural publicity and propaganda, social education, promotion and development of economic conditions in regard to agricultural and welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were the obligatory functions of the ex-Taluka Development Boards. Discretionary functions included establishment and running of primary and secondary education, encourage and develop co-operative societies, develop village industries and commerce, organise famine relief works, improvement of cattle, fisheries and poultries, public transport facilities, trade or

occupational institutions. The Taluka Development Boards were also entrusted with the programmes under Community Development and the Five Year Plans. There was a Taluka Development Board fund and it depended mostly on government grants for its financial resources. Karnataka was the only state in India where the entire land revenue was collected and transferred to the Taluka Development Boards and Panchayats in the ratio of 60:40 respectively. Each Taluka Development Board had one Chief Executive Officer also, called as Block Development Officer, to perform the above functions.

Under the Act every district had one District Development Council consisting of the officials, nominated and indirectly elected members. The Deputy Commissioner of the district was its ex-officio President. It was more of a bureaucratic and advisory than a popular body and it was only a co-ordinating and supervisory agency, with no executive functions. It also did not have its independent sources of revenue.

But because of certain practical problems, and dissolution and supersession of the Village and Town Panchayats, Taluka Development Boards and District Development Councils, the administrators were appointed to these local bodies.
The District Development Council merged with District Rural Development Society with Special Deputy Commissioner as its ex-officio Chairman.

A new era in the process of political decentralisation started in Karnataka when a three tier Panchayat Raj System was enforced by enactment of the Karnataka Zilla Pariyathads, Taluka Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act, 1983 (Karnataka Act No. 20 of 1985). The Act came into force on 14.8.1985. The Chapter from XI to XIV pertaining to Nyaya Panchayats or a form of people's judicial councils could not be brought into force until after August 1990, i.e., the expiry of five years from the date of the publication of the Act in the official Gazette.

The main objective of the enactment of the Act is to transfer power to the people. The preamble of the Act reads:

"Whereas it is expedient to provide for establishment in rural areas, of Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats to assign them local government and

65. This Act received the assent of the President on 10.7.1985. It was first published in the Karnataka Gazette Extraordinary on 2.8.1985.
judicial functions and to entrust the execution of certain works and development schemes of the State Five Year Plans to the Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayats and to provide for the decentralisation of powers and functions under certain enactments to those local bodies for the purpose of promoting the development of democratic institutions and securing a greater measure of participation by the people in the said plans and in local and governmental affairs and for purposes connected with and incidental thereto".66

This legislation of the Karnataka Government is a bold step in the direction of decentralisation and devolution of powers to the people which followed the pattern recommended by Ashok Mehta Committee.

Democratic decentralisation has three important meanings: (i) minimising the gulf between the government and the governed, (ii) comprehensive or substantial vesting of powers and responsibilities, and (iii) provision for active participation of the people in the planning, implementation and monitoring of economic and social plans and programmes. With this objective in mind the Karnataka legislation created for the first time, access to the vast majority of the rural people to a chain of institutions which is as follows:

1. Grama Sabha: At the village level (basic tier of Panchayat Raj set up).
2. Mandal Panchayat: Below the Taluka. This is an important democratic body with effective power.
3. Taluk Panchayat Samithi: At the block level. This is a Taluka advisory committee of the Zilla Parishad.
4. Zilla Parishad: At the District level. This is also an important democratic body with effective power.

These units at various levels became operational in April 1987 after elections, framing of rules and making various administrative arrangements. The organisational chart is given on the next page.
PANCHAYAT RAJ STRUCTURE IN KARNATAKA

**ZILLA PARISHAD**
(District Level)

ELECTED MEMBERS, MLA, MLC, M.P.

STANDING COMMITTEES

**TALUK PANCHAYAT SAMITI**
(Block Level or Taluka Level)

PRADHANS OF MANDAL PANCHAYATS, NOMINATED MEMBERS

**MANDAL PANCHAYAT**
(Mandal Level Group of Villages)

ELECTED, NOMINATED AND CO-OPTED MEMBERS

STANDING COMMITTEES

**GRAM SAMBHA**
(Village Level)

ADULT RESIDENTS OF THE VILLAGE
Let us examine the provisions made under the Act in respect of the above institutions one by one.

The Grama Sabha

At the grass root level the erstwhile Village Panchayat was replaced by Grama Sabha which comprises all the persons whose names are included in the electoral roll of the Zilla Parishads for the time being in vogue pertaining to the village. Grama Sabha meets at least twice annually and considers the following matters at its meetings.

1. Discusses and reviews all development programmes and implementation of these development programmes in the village. The report relating to the development programmes of the village undertaken during the previous year and those that are proposed to be undertaken during the current year is placed before Grama Sabha. This exercise provides for a vertical link between basic tier and Mandal Panchayat.

2. Proposes for new programmes and protects unity and integrates all sections of the society.

3. Draws up plans for setting up Land Army consisting of all able bodied persons in the village.
4. Initiates adult literacy programmes within the village.

5. Selects beneficiaries for all beneficiary oriented programmes.

6. Plans for local improvement, including minimum needs, welfare and production oriented programmes, also including the cropping pattern for the season.

The Pradhans of the concerned Mandal Panchayat and in his absence the Upapradhana or any member of the Mandal Panchayat presides over every Grama Sabha meetings.

Following are some of the important functions required to be performed by Grama Sabha.

i. Preparation of promotion of development schemes of the village.

ii. Organising sanitation and drainage schemes.

iii. Initiating community welfare programmes and mobilising voluntary labour and contributions in cash and kind.

iv. Assisting Mandal Panchayat in the implementation of the development schemes of the village.
There are 27,024 Grama Sabhas in the State which are considered as the very bed rock of the Panchayati Raj system in Karnataka.

The Mandal Panchayats

The Mandal Panchayat occupies a strategic place in the process of democratic decentralisation. It is a fully elected body, constituted above Grama Sabha and below Zilla Parishad. It deals directly with the problems of rural families and individuals, and makes an attempt to reduce spatial gap and the gap between the government and the governed. It possesses substantial political powers and provides a mechanism for participation of the people.

Mandal Panchayat is an area comprising a village or a group of villages having a population of not less than 8,000 and not more than 12,000 (based on 1971 census). In malnad districts where the distance between two villages is much and in the districts where there is heavy rainfall, a minimum population of 4,000 is sufficient for constitution.

67. Chapters III to VI of the Act deal with the provisions for Mandal Panchayats, pp. 4-111.
68. These are the districts like Belgaum, Chickmagalur, Dakshina Kannada, Dharwar, Hassan, Kodagu, Shimoga, Uttar Kannada.
of Mandal Panchayat or if it is necessary, as a special case Government may by notification or order declare an area within a radius of 8 K.M. from the centre of the village as a mandal. Any area comprising a village or group villages having a population of either less than 8,000 or more than 12,000 also can be declared as Mandal but with a prior permission of the Government.

The Mandal Panchayat consists of such number of elected members (representatives) at the rate of one member for every 400 population. Total membership of each Mandal Panchayat ranges between 20-24 and in the sparsely populated malnad regions it may be about 8. Out of the total number of seats of Mandal Panchayat 25 percent (or ¼th) are reserved for women out of which one seat is reserved for woman belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. If persons belonging to Backward Classes have no representation, the Zilla Parishad can nominate two persons belonging to the said classes to Mandal Panchayats. Not less than 18% of the seats are reserved for persons belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. A woman or a person belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes for whom seats have been reserved in a Mandal Panchayat, is not prevented in contesting for election to any non-reserved seat in such Mandal Panchayat.
Every person whose name appears in the voters list of any Mandal Panchayat constituency is qualified to be elected as a member of the Mandal Panchayat. If a person for the reasons that he is less than twenty-one years of age, or he does not ordinarily reside in the Mandal or he is dismissed from Government service or service under any local authority is disqualified for being chosen or nominated and for being a member of a Mandal Panchayat. If a member of a Mandal Panchayat remains absent consecutively for more than four months from mandal or for more than three consecutive ordinary meetings of the Mandal Panchayat without the leave of the Mandal Panchayat, his seat is deemed to have become vacant.

Every Mandal Panchayat elects two members to function as Pradhana and Upapradhana respectively. The prescribed officer (Munsiff) having jurisdiction over the area of Mandal Panchayat will decide any dispute relating to the validity of the election of Pradhana or Upapradhana.

The Act has made provision for appointment of administrators not below the rank of Assistant Commissioner during the vacancy in the office of Pradhana and Upapradhana. To move a motion against the Pradhana or
Upradhana two-third members of the Mandal Panchayat should support the motion.

The Mandal Panchayat meets at least once in every month for the transaction of business and if the Pradhana whenever thinks fit he may call a special meeting. The quorum for such monthly and special meetings is one-third of the total number of members.

Under the Act the Mandal Panchayat is vested with many functions usually described as obligatory, discretionary and transferred. A long list of functions is contained in the omnibus section 56 of the Act. This section stipulates that "it shall be the duty of every Mandal Panchayat, as far as the funds at its disposal will allow to make reasonable provision within the Mandal" 69 for those functions. The duty is therefore mandatory or statutory.

The 'duty' implies provisions regarding 1) sanitation and health 2) public works and amenities 3) agriculture and animal husbandry 4) welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Scheduled Tribes and Backward Classes and 5) other matters. In addition the government may authorise any Mandal Panchayat, by a general or special order to exercise any functions or perform any duties other than those listed in sections 56 and 57. The Mandal Panchayat is vested with the power of

1. Acquiring and holding both moveable and immovable properties.

2. Controlling the erection, alteration or addition to the existing buildings without prior permission.

3. Prohibiting offensive or dangerous trade without licence.

4. Controlling hotels etc.

5. Licensing of shops.


7. Removing structures, trees, etc. which are in ruins or likely to fall.

8. Improve the sanitary conditions.

70. From 1.4.1989 the Mandal Panchayats have been entrusted with work of preparation of implementation of the Jawahar Rozgar plan.
9. Providing adequate and pure water for the public and private purposes and prohibiting and imposing penalty for use of water from certain sources.

10. Closing of places for the disposal of the dead.

11. Licensing of places for the burial of dead. We find more detailed and specific provisions on 1) dangerous quarrying, 2) use of offensive substance, 3) regulation of smoke and 4) prohibition of nuisance.

However, the punitive punishment for some of these offences, namely a fine which extends to Rs.25 or Rs.50 is grossly inadequate.

The elected representatives in addition to attending the meetings of Mandal Panchayat, work and take decisions in the three standing committees:

1. To look after agricultural production, animal husbandry and village industries, the Mandal Panchayat can appoint Production Committee.

2. To promote the educational, economic, social, cultural and other interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled
Tribes and the Backward Classes, to get social justice and protect these weaker sections from any type of exploitation, the Mandal Panchayat can appoint Social Justice Committee.

3. To provide educational, public health, public works facilities, the Mandal Panchayat can appoint Amenities Committee.

Each Committee consists of not less than three and not more than five members including the Pradhana and Upapradhana. For the Production Committee and Social Justice Committee the Pradhana is the ex-officio member and Chairman and for Amenities Committee the Upapradhana is the ex-officio member and Chairman. Each of the above Committee has the power to co-opt members of farmers clubs, mahila mandals, yuvak mandals and other similar bodies recognised by the Government.

Every Mandal Panchayat has got a Fund called Mandal Fund which is formed by i) allotment of amount by the government or Zilla Parishad, ii) proceeds of tax and fee imposed by the Mandal Panchayat namely building tax, water rate, fee for grazing cattle, duty on transfer of immovable property, entertainment tax, market fees, iii) all sums
ordered by the court, iv) the sale proceeds of all district, dung or refuse including the dead bodies of animals, v) amount received in the form of loans or contributions by Government or any other authority or person or by way of gift, vi) grants subsidy or loans received from the Karnataka Village Industries Corporation or Karnataka Khadi and Village Industries Board, vii) grants received by Government at the rate of ten rupees per person residing in the mandal calculated on the basis of the last preceding census.

As compared to the big list of functions, the resources of the Mandal Panchayat are very meagre. Mandal Panchayats will impose and revise the local taxes as was done earlier but the effective recovery is to be expected.

The Mandal Panchayat will prepare its own sub-plan which becomes a part of the Zilla Parishad plan. It has the responsibility of planning and supervising certain works and schemes and has decision making power over a large number of schemes. Below the Zilla Parishad, the only unit of institutionalised political power is the Mandal Panchayat. A resolution of the Mandal Panchayat cannot be suspended by any government officer and its plans are not amended by any Zilla Parishad. This ensures its political autonomy.
The Zilla Parishad of the district has direct control over the financial and establishment matters of the Mandal Panchayats. There is a Secretary for every Mandal Panchayat, appointed by the Zilla Parishad, in consultation with the Mandal Panchayats who will exercise all the powers and perform his duties under the Act. Annual budget estimates of the Mandal Panchayat having been approved by the Mandal Panchayat will be approved by the Zilla Parishad. This annual budget estimate consists of the opening balance and estimated income of the Mandal Panchayat for the following financial year, and the proposed expenditure for the Mandal Panchayat establishment and for the discharge of the duties. The Secretary of the Mandal Panchayat keeps in the prescribed form annual administration report and annual accounts statements, before the Mandal Panchayat meeting for approval, which will be sent to the Zilla Parishad. The Controller of State Accounts may authorise an officer to audit the Mandal Panchayat accounts annually and the auditor will forward the audit report to the Mandal Panchayat, for compliance of irregularities marking a copy to Zilla Parishad.

A Schedule of employees of the Mandal Panchayat, with their designations and grades and the details of the salaries and allowances, is to be submitted by the Mandal
Thus, there is a vertical link between the Mandal Panchayats and the Zilla Parishads in all these matters and the Mandal Panchayat is considered as the second tier in the present Panchayat Raj system in the state. The establishment of the Taluk Panchayat Samitis, in between the Mandal Panchayat and Zilla Parishad, makes it the third tier, only in name as it does not have vast functions like Mandal Panchayats or Zilla Parishads.

One of the important weaknesses is that at the Mandal level, there is no administrative machinery which can execute the programmes, for rural development in the area. They have to depend on the Zilla Parishad machinery.

**The taluk Panchayat Samithis**

Every taluk has a taluk Panchayat Samithi consisting

71. Chapter VI of the Act deals with provisions of the constitution of Taluk Panchayat Samithis, pp. 112-113.
of members like 1) members of the state Legislature, representing whole or part of the taluk, 2) members of the Zilla Parishad of the taluk, 3) Pradhams of the Mandal Panchayats of the taluk, 4) President of the Taluk Agriculture Produce Co-operative Marketing Society, 5) President of Primary Land Development Bank, 6) five members belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, Backward Classes, Women co-opted by the taluk Panchayat Samithis resolution and approved by the Zilla Parishad. The Member of Legislative Assembly, representing the major portion of the taluk, is the Chairman of the Taluk Panchayat Samithi and in his absence or if he becomes Minister, the Taluk Panchayat Samithi elects Chairman from among its members.

The functions of the Taluk Panchayat Samithi are to i) advise, afford guidance or assistance, to the Mandal Panchayat and review from time to time, the works taken up by the Mandal Panchayats and also to co-ordinate the work of the Mandal Panchayats, where it relates to more than one Mandal, ii) exercise such powers, as specified by the Zilla Parishads in relation to the works and schemes to be undertaken in the taluk, iii) enter on and inspect any immovable property or institution in the taluk under the control and management of the Zilla Parishad or Taluk Panchayat Samithi, iv) inspect any work or development
scheme in progress in the taluk undertaken by the Zilla parishad or the taluk Panchayat Samithi or under its directions, and v) any other duty entrusted by the Zilla Parishad or Government.

The Act provides that in discharging of its functions the officers working in the taluk shall assist the Taluk Panchayat Samithi.

The Block Development Officer of the taluk is the Secretary of the Taluk Panchayat Samithi.

The Zilla Parishads

Every district in the state has a Zilla Parishad. The most radical and comprehensive body reflecting democratic decentralisation is the Zilla Parishad.

Every Zilla Parishad is composed of i) elected members from the taluk of the district at the rate of one member for the population of 28,000 or part thereof except in Kodagu district, where there is one member for every 12,000

population or part thereof (1971 census), ii) the Chairman or President of the District Credit Co-operative Bank (associate member), who is entitled to take part in the proceedings of the Zilla Parishad, but has no right to vote and also not entitled to hold the office of Adhyaksha or Upadhyaksha, iii) the members of the State Legislative Assembly, Members of the Parliament, Members of the State Legislative Council, who are entitled to take part in the proceedings and have the right to vote and do not have the right to hold the office of Adhyaksha or Upadhyaksha.

As in the case of Mandal Panchayat, reservation of 25 per cent seats for women and 18 per cent seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is provided in the Zilla Parishad also thus recognising the principle of protective discrimination.

The Zilla Parishad has Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha elected by the members of the Zilla Parishad immediately after its constitution. Both Adhyaksha and Upadhyaksha respectively are of the rank of Minister of State and the Deputy Minister. The Adhyaksha is the executive head of the Zilla Parishad and performs all duties imposed and exercises all powers conferred on him under the Act.
The Zilla Parishad is empowered to plan, and formulate, execute, advise as well as monitor all development plans for the district. Its own budget is framed and approved by itself. It also approves the mandal budgets. It has its own cadre of employees. The Zilla Parishad has a Chief Secretary of the rank of senior Deputy Commissioner, two Deputy Secretaries, one Chief Accounts Officer, the District Planning Officer, two Assistant Secretaries, two Council Secretaries. The Chief Secretary exercises the powers and discharges the duties specially conferred or imposed upon him under the Act, controls the officers and servants of the Zilla Parishad, supervises and controls the execution of all works of the Zilla Parishad, draws and disburses moneys out of the Zilla Parishad Fund, attends every meeting of the Zilla Parishad. In the performance of his duties, the Chief Secretary is assisted by the Deputy Secretaries, and the Chief Accounts Officer advises the Zilla Parishad in all the financial policy matters.

Thus the Zilla Parishad is the supreme body in the district. None of the officers of the Government can suspend any resolution of the Zilla Parishad and the State Government cannot amend any of its plans. In this Panchayati Raj hierarchy, there is no apex body above the Zilla Parishad. Indeed the Zilla Parishad is nothing short of "District Government" or "mini Government".
As in the case of Mandal Panchayat, various developmental programmes and projects of the district will be executed and implemented through following nine standing committees, consisting of six members including the Chairman elected by the Zilla Parishad members from among themselves. The Upadhyaksha is the ex-officio member and Chairman of the General Standing Committee. The Secretary of the Zilla Parishad is the ex-officio Secretary of each Standing Committee.

1. The General Standing Committee - performs functions in respect of establishment and all miscellaneous residuary matters.

2. The Finance and Audit Committee - performs functions in respect of Zilla Parishad finances, framing of budgets, supervising the revenue and expenditure of the Zilla Parishad.

3. The Planning and Development Committee - Functions in respect of co-operation, small savings scheme and other functions relating to the development plan of the district are performed by this Committee.

4. The Public Works and Amenities Committee - The functions relating to communications, buildings, rural housing,
village extensions, relief against natural calamities, water supply and other related matters are performed by this Committee.

5. The Social Justice Committee - This Committee has a mandate to promote educational, economic, social and cultural interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and Backward classes and to protect them "from social injustice and all forms of exploitation".

6. The Educational Committee - This Committee is in charge of all activities of education and it will survey and evaluate all educational activities, particularly adult literacy and cultural activities of the Zilla Parishad.

7. The Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Committee - Agricultural production, animal husbandry, contour bunding and reclamation are dealt with by this Committee.

8. The Health Committee - This deals with the health services, hospitals, water supply, family welfare and other allied matters.

9. The Industries Committee - Functions relating to village and cottage industries are performed by this Committee.
It is obligatory on the part of the Zilla Parishad to make provisions for the following matters.

1. Preparation of the plan for the District development and overall supervision, co-ordination and integration of schemes of development at taluk and district level.

2. Devise and promote measures for increasing agricultural production, popularise the use of improved agricultural implements and adopt improved agricultural practices; establishment and maintenance of seed farms and commercial farms, agricultural schools, godowns.

3. Opening and maintenance of village veterinary hospitals, first aid centres and mobile veterinary dispensaries at village, taluk and district levels; dairy developments and measures for improvement of cattle breed and other livestock and poultry.

4. Promotion of welfare of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Backward classes, supervision of the implementation of all schemes for the welfare of these sections of people, particularly the management of hostels in the district and distribution of grants, loans and subsidies to the persons.
5. Construction, maintenance and repairs of district roads and bridges, and administrative and other buildings.

6. Management of dispensaries and hospitals, regulation of fairs including cattle fairs and festivals.

7. Construction, renovation and maintenance of minor irrigation works, provision of timely and equitable distribution of water, development of ground water resources.

8. Promotion and development of rural and cottage industries, small scale industries and organisation of marketing facilities for the products of these industries.

9. Development of horticulture, farms, gardens and cultivation of fruits and vegetables.

10. Promotion and extension of activities of co-operative societies.

11. Implementation of adult literacy, survey and evaluation of educational activities, encouraging the services of youth clubs, mahila mandals and association of farmers, establishment and maintenance of general hostels, ashram schools and orphanages.


13. Electrification in rural areas.
14. Distribution of essential commodities in rural areas.

The erstwhile District Rural Development Society has merged with the Zilla Parishad and all important beneficiary oriented programmes like Integrated Rural Development Programme, Anthyodaya, TRYSEM, 100-wells, Sprinkler Irrigation, Million Well Scheme, Surplus Land Grantee Assistance, Gobar Gas, Astra Ole, Bhagya Jyoti, Negilu Bhagya, Ganga Kalyana, Rural Housing, and Special Component Plan and area development programmes like N.R.E.P., R.L.E.G.P., D.P.A.P., Western Ghat Development Programmes, etc., have been transferred to Zilla Parishad.

Every Zilla Parishad has a Fund, called Zilla Parishad Fund, administered by the Zilla Parishad and forms part of, or be paid into Zilla Parishad Fund i.e.,

i. the amount transferred to Zilla Parishad Fund by appropriation from out of consolidated Fund of the State,

ii. all grants, assignments, loans and contributions received from Government,

iii. all taxes, fees, penalties, fines and other collections,
iv. all rents from lands or other Zilla Parishad properties and all proceeds of land, securities and other properties sold by the Zilla Parishad,

v. all money in the forms of interests, profits accruing by gifts, grants, assignments or transfers from private individuals or institutions.

A complete account of actual and expected receipt and expenditure for the year ending 31st March should be presented in the meeting of the Zilla Parishad held between 1st November and 1st January. Along with this, the budget estimate of the income and expenditure of the Zilla Parishad for the official year, commencing from 1st April should also be presented. The budget as passed by the Zilla Parishad is sent to the Government. The Zilla Parishad accounts are audited at least once in every year by the Accountant General in Karnataka.

The Act also makes provisions for appointment of Finance Commission by the Government. Within six months from the date of commencement of the Act for the period of five years consisting of a Chairman and two members to study the problems of income and expenditure in respect of the Zilla Parishad. It is mandatory on the Finance Commission
to make recommendations regarding the pattern of assistance and the principles of grants-in-aid from the Government to Zilla Parishad.

The Zilla Parishad has the direct control and supervision over the functions of the Mandal Panchayats. The Zilla Parishad may requisition any proceedings of Mandal Panchayat, records, reports, accounts, etc. It brings to notice of the Mandal Panchayat of any of its defaults and irregularities and warns the Mandal Panchayat of its failure in executing its functions. The Zilla Parishad has the power of dissolving Mandal Panchayat if it i) misuses its power or ii) fails to exercise its functions frequently.

Thus the Zilla Parishad has a vertical power and control through Taluk Panchayat Samithi and Mandal Panchayat and Grama Sabha.

Evaluation of the working of the Panchayati Raj institutions

The new Panchayati Raj system introduced in Karnataka represents a bold step towards democratic decentralisation and is based on the principles of self-governance and sovereignty of the people. The people all over the country have been watching its performance with keen interest. In
order to undertake a quick assessment of how the system is working, and what environmental and structural factors needed to be modified to place it on a sound basis, an Evaluation Committee was constituted under the Chairmanship of Shri K.S.Krishnaswamy in June 1988, which submitted its report in March 1989. The Committee observed that the actual performance of Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats is very impressive and "notwithstanding the novelty and complexity of legislative and procedural arrangements for transfer of power, men and women at local levels have become keenly aware of their altered political status".

The Committee among others made the following important recommendations:

1. The Mandal Panchayats' command over resources and freedom of action should be progressively enlarged as there is gross mis-match between the functional responsibility of Mandal Panchayats and their direct command over resources.


74. Ibid., p. 86.

75. Ibid., pp. 86-96.
2. If quick and effective steps are not taken to enable Mandal Panchayats to discharge their function well, and the Gram Sabhas fail to appreciate the constraints on them, people could lose interest in attending Gram Sabhas. Therefore, it is vital that the requirement of convening Gram Sabha meetings at least twice a year should be enforced.

3. There should be proper operational linkages between Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishads.

4. The number of Standing Committees existing in Zilla Parishads be reduced to four or five by regrouping and that their regular meetings could be once in the two months rather than every month.

5. There is a need to restructure the Government budget and reorganise Government departments with a view to enhance the technical support they can give to Panchayati Raj institutions.

6. There is a need to strengthen and streamline the administrative set up at the mandal, taluk and district levels.

7. The post of Block Development Officer should be upgraded to Class I, Junior scale I.A.S. officers,
Officers of Karnataka Civil Services, hand picked officers of other departments and fresh graduates of Indian Institute of Management, Institute of Rural Management at Anand and Indian Institute of Technology should be appointed to the post of Block Development Officer on contract basis.

8. A Special Assistant drawn from the I.A.S. or the State level service should assist the Chief Secretary of the Zilla Parishads.

In order to go into the problems of income and expenditure in respect of Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats and to make recommendations regarding the pattern of assistance and the principles governing grant-in-aid, to assess the cost of maintenance of the services and amenities to be rendered by Mandal Panchayats, and examine the structure of taxation inherited by the Mandal Panchayats under the repealed Karnataka Village Panchayats and Local Boards Act 1959 and to suggest modifications for improving the resources, the Government of Karnataka constituted a Finance Commission in February 1988 under the Chairmanship of Dr.Honnavar. The Committee submitted its Report in 1989 and

76. Section 210 of the Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samithis, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats Act 1983 provides for the constitution of Finance Commission.
made the following recommendations.

1. Instead of providing specific grants-in-aid from year to year, it is desirable to give the Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats a sense of fiscal independence by assigning a part of the tax revenue.

2. Administrative expenditure should not be allowed to grow in a resource scarce situation, but economy should not be practised at the expense of essential services.

3. In order to enable the mandals to have some untied funds for expenditure on schemes which they consider desirable, the per capita grant should be raised to ₹15 from 1989-90 itself out of which the Mandal Panchayats and Zilla Parishads share should be ₹10 and ₹5 respectively.

4. The departmental receipts collected in the area of Mandals should be made over to them.

5. To encourage the Mandal Panchayats to put much effort into collection of taxes a matching grant of 1 to 1 should be given to all the mandals which revise the rate to the ceiling provided in the Act and collect 80 per cent of the total assessment.
6. To enable the Mandal Panchayats to collect and use the resources effectively and performing their functions adequately the staff at the Mandal Panchayats level should be strengthened by rationalising the existing personnel structure in the departments and Zilla Paishads.

7. Repairs and maintenance of existing assets, particularly primary schools, health centres and roads and culverts should receive the high priority.

8. The existing delegation of administrative technical and financial powers to Zilla Parishads and Mandal Panchayats should be reviewed with a view to enabling them to perform the tasks assigned to them more effectively and in conformity with the provisions of the Act.

9. The Mandal Panchayats should have the freedom to open and account with the nearby commercial banks for limited transactions because they face difficulties in operating their financial transactions through the treasury system.

10. As provided in the Act, the Zilla Parishads should be permitted to create income earning assets and set up enterprises through bank loans guaranteed by Government, as no specific powers of taxation are vested in them for raising additional resources.