CHAPTER – I

INTRODUCTION

An overwhelming majority of India’s population lives in villages, a holistic development of its rural life is a requisite for the acceleration of the pace of overall economic development of the country. Rural development is the crux of India’s development strategy. Rural development programmes are designed to facilitate a multi-faceted growth of the rural poor by extending the benefits of development to them. It aims at the improvement of their living standard by providing them opportunities for the fullest utilization of their potential through their active participation in the process of goal-oriented change. Rural development also tends to reduce migrational pressure on cities and towns. It also enables the use of human and natural resources in the rural areas and to reduce area-wise disparities.¹

Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for themselves their children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest amongst those who seek livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of rural development.²

Evidence indicates that in India, public and governmental interest in rural development has been growing rapidly and strong and serious commitment towards it on the part our policy-makers is clearly visible. The government has initiated a number of programmes to solve the chronic problems facing villagers in India. In fact, efforts to improve the rural economy were initiated soon after independence, particularly after the Constitution came into force. Notably, in the
early stages, despite some efforts at involving the people through democratic decentralization, community development and Panchayat Raj, rural development programmes were virtually synonymous with agricultural development. This followed prevailing worldwide thinking and India’s excessive concern, especially till the Green Revolution in the late 1960s, with food self-sufficiency. In the seventies, however, it came to be realized that rural development is much broader in scope than merely agricultural development. Besides, it was recognized that development in agricultural was not a panacea for all ills and that development should not be confined to a single area change, however significant it may be. Therefore, if the strategy for rural development had to be made effective, a multi pronged approach to rural problems was imperative. A package programme of rural development had to be devised, a multi-dimensional approach taken up and multi-institutional efforts initiated.

Introduction of Panchayat Raj was hailed as one of the most important political innovations in Independent India. It was also considered as a revolutionary step. Panchayat Raj is a system of local self government wherein the people take upon themselves the responsibility for development. It is also a system of institutional arrangement for achieving rural development through people’s initiative and participation. Panchayat Raj involves a three-tier structure of democratic institution at district, block and village levels namely, Zilla Parishad, Taluka and village panchayats respectively. These institutions are considered as training ground for democracy and give political education to the masses. These institutions were established in 1959 based on the philosophy of decentralization and gram Swaraj. Rural development plans and programmes
are implemented at this level so that fruits of development can accrue to the community directly.

Of the complex issues confronting the policy makers regarding the structures and processes evolving and executing the policies and programmes for the rural development, the respective roles of the Panchayat Raj bodies and the bureaucracy have always remained on the forefront. Indeed, the issue dates back to the years following Independence when under the grab of planned economic development of economy, the government set on to bestow the bureaucracy with almost exclusive powers in planning and executing the projects for development including rural development launched immediately after Independence in the name of Community Development programmes (CDP) could not bring about the desired level of socio-economic transformations in the rural areas promoting the government to look into the causes for the failures of the programme. Since the lack of people’s active participation in the whole exercises of the CDP was diagnosed to be biggest ill leading to the failure of the programme, the solution was presented in the form of the Panchayat Raj institutions by the Balwantrai Mehta Committee. Pointing out that democratic decentralization in respect of the rural development programmes was the most urgent need of the hour, the committee offered the blueprint of reenergizing the Panchayat Raj institutions in order to bring about a people-centric development model for rural development in the country in place of the bureaucracy-driven model based on the colonial mindset of the government.

With the inauguration of the Panchayat Raj bodies in 1959 in many parts of the country, the entire concept of rural development was set for a major transformation with the institution of local self- government dovetailed with acting
as equal partners in executing the plans and programmes of development in rural areas. Taking the active participation of people in the development activities as an affront to their privileged domain, the bureaucracy started looking down upon the Panchayat Raj bodies as their rival rather than partners in managing the responsibility of rural transformations. The colonial mindset of bureaucracy was undoubtedly able to defeat the entire notion of institutions of local self-government as the medium of ensuring people’s participation in managing the programmes of rural development for a long period of time, but nature and extent of this malady were getting clear in the minds of the policy makers with passage of time. Hence, the move towards minimizing the role of district collector in carrying out the development activities in the district was set into motion finding its culmination in the passage of the seventy third Amendment Act 1993 when the Panchayat Raj bodies were taken to be the exclusive instrument of running the activities of rural development. Despite the explicit constitutional provision on the issue, the matter has still not been resolved, ostensibly due to the efforts on the part of the bureaucracy to scuttle the endeavors of the Panchayat Raj institutions to effectively plan and execute the development plans in the rural areas. The bureaucratic apathy towards the panchayat bodies is not only getting reflected in various types of hindrances being placed in the way of Panchayats in the field of developmental activities but also in a number of indirect moves to throttle these bodies through various methods ranging from implicating audit objections in their functioning to their outright dissolution in certain cases on flimsy grounds.

The long years of functioning of the Panchayat Raj institutions in India have brought to the fore the nature and extent of various problems which go to
deliberate these fundamental institutions of rural self-government in a democratic country. Marred by lack of proper perspective and positive outlook at both the political as well as the bureaucratic levels, these bodies have come to face a series of problems in the nature of structural, functional and those relating to resources. After a gap of some years, when move is initiated to plug the loopholes in the system, the result is in the form of solution to some problems but genesis of fresh batch of glitches in the functioning of these bodies at the same time. Hence, most of the efforts in reinvigorating the Panchayati Raj institutions like the Balwatrai Mehata Committee Report, the Ashok Mehat Committee Report, and the seventy-third Amendment Act, despite being well intentioned and sweeping in their formulations have not been able to bring about a turnaround in the structures of rural local self-government in a such way that they truly attain the place of pride in the democratic dispensation of the policy. In sum, the issues in the effective functioning of the Panchayat Raj bodies are not only drawn from the fault in the legislation on the subject but also from suicidal lapses on the part of the people running these bodies on the one hand, and from those vested interests like the politicians and the bureaucrats who mistakenly look at the Panchayat Raj as a potential threat to their well-entrenched interest in the system, on the other.

The lack of cordial relations between the district level bureaucracy and the elected representatives of the Panchayat Raj bodies has also some times become the bane of the institutions of rural self-government. As pointed out earlier, the major bone of contention, between the government functionaries and the members of the Panchayats emerge in the context of the planning, execution, and the monitoring of the rural development programmes in the
district. Since in the previous times, it was exclusive domains of the bureaucracy to plan and execute such programmes without any monitoring mechanism from outside, the creation of the Panchayat Raj institutions for such purposes has been taken as an anathema by the bureaucracy in their domain of functioning. However, over the years, as and as the developmental powers and functions have been devolved to the elected rural institutions of self governance, the bureaucracy seems to have developed a kind of sadistic attitude towards these bodies and has always been looking for some alibi to defeat the initiatives of the Panchayats. The institutions becomes more complicated in cases where a clear demarcation of the functional domain of two important players in the field of rural development has been carried out, the obvious consequence of which has not been found to be not only a great degree of overlapping in the discharge of responsibilities by these agencies but also sometimes working at cross-purpose.

This has been one of the important reasons for the failure of the Panchayat Raj. Unfortunately, the present amendment to the constitution has also left this problem untouched and has authorized the legislatures to make suitable provisions. Since the state level bureaucracy is more dominant and plays a important role in formulating any policy and legislation, it is still doubtful whether the problem of relationship between local level bureaucracy and elected preventatives of Panchayat Raj will be properly attended to by the legislatures.\(^3\)

In such a scenario, it would seem to be very difficult for the Panchayati Raj bodies to be able to successfully carry out their responsibilities of rural development and ensuring to the rural masses a means of participating in governing process of the district unless some way out is found to liberate the
elected bodies from the undue duress of the bureaucracy in conjunction with other vested interests acting these bodies.

Owing to several factors, thus, the Panchayat Raj institutions could not deliver what was expected from them. Traditional leadership entrenched in caste and land ownership is still in dominance. Functional leadership has not emerged. Vested interests, corruption, inefficiency, groupism, unhealthy rivalry, misuse of powers, and motivated decisions and actions have adversely affected the functioning and limited utility of Panchayat Raj to an average villager.⁴

Notwithstanding the bleak picture exiting in the pre-1993 times, things have started to brighten up after the enactment of the Seventy-third Amendment Act as the most obvious lacunae of the structures and functions of the Panchayat Raj bodies have sought to be eradicated, Right from the guarantee of the survival of these bodies through mandatory elections to be conducted by the autonomous state election commission, to provision of assured financial resources to these bodies have gone a long way in putting the once derailed notion of Panchayat Raj in the country back on the track. The most outstanding difference has, however, been made by the provision for one-third reservation of seats and the offices of the chairpersons of the women as it has energized the sleeping mass of the half of the Indians in such way that they now are becoming the pioneers of the rural socio-economic reconstruction and transformation in the Indian society. They have not only become the active agents for bringing about a holistic transformation in the outlook of the village folks towards the initiatives of the government in carrying out the policies of rural development as they no longer remain passive recipient to the doles given by the authorities, but also successes in chartering a new course in honesty and efficiency by evolving
unique monitoring system for the pioneering rural development schemes like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme and check corruption in their implementation due to their upright character and sincere efforts in ensuring the fruits of schemes to the real benefactors.¹

Contemporary Public Administration is not just about efficiency, it also upholds democratic participation, accountability, and empowerment. There is, therefore, a constant tension between (a) how to make government efficient (b) how to keep it accountable. There is also a corresponding tension between ‘the conception of people as consumers in the context of relations between state and market’. And the conception of ‘people’ as citizens in the context of relations between state and society; What it suggests is the increasing importance of citizen participation in public affairs. So institutional reforms are but a significant step of ‘strengthening (people’s) voice in general and the voice of the poor in particular. This strategy, as the 2000 the World Bank report endorses, emphasizes that:

The institutional reform is not simply a matter of changing the ways in which public hierarchies are arranged. Its focus is on the broad array of ‘rules of the game’ that shape the incentives and actions of public actors including the ‘voice’ mechanisms that promote the rule of law and the accountability of government to its citizens.²

What this perspective underlines is the need for a citizen centric government. Several steps have been taken to restructure the administration in response to the impetus, both from domestic and external sources. Of these steps, the adoption of the seventy fourth Amendment Act of 1993 and the
implementation of the Fifth pay commission report appear to be significant because of the felt impact on the prevalent governance. Arising from the perspectives outlined above, these are those momentous steps which are potentially path breaking and contain seeds for radical transformation in both the content and style of governance. Interestingly, these two measures the Amendment Acts and the pay Commission recommendations coincide not only with the liberalization impetus of the Central Government, but also with the world Bank's marked emphasis on ‘good governance’ and decentralization. As the fundamental impulse of policy making moves away from centralized state institutions to the markets, these amendments, in principle, should facilitate the creation of structures that devolve power to the localized bodies. The underlying principle of Panchayat Raj is the use local knowledge, popular experience, and participation in the making of decisions that effect local people. There is no doubt that the reformed Panchayat Raj institutions are supposed to reconstitute the decisions process on the basis of local participation on a continuous basis and thus, in principle, represent an institutionalized shifts in power towards lower, hitherto ‘disempowered’ sections of rural population. The only flaw in this argument is that the village based institutions continue to reflect unequal social and economic structures, and higher caste and economically powerful groups within the village continue to be the defacto leaders in Panchayat while the women, despite the reservation, remain ‘proxies’ to male counterparts who participate in Panchayat affairs and decisions. Notwithstanding the obvious structural constraints, the Panchayat Raj institutions provide a form of governance that is based on community resources. At the grass roots level, community is the organic unit of cultural, social, economic, and political organization. In view of the growing popularity of the Panchayat Raj institutions,
there is no doubt that a better administration can easily be achieved by building on the community resources rather than trying to import’ man-agerialization’ of public service.

**Statement of the Problem:**

The renewed movement towards democratic decentralization and citizen centric has eroded the bureaucratic monopoly over the development process and has shifted the focus of power to those who matter at the grass root level. This has been a reality due to variety of factors with constitutional recognition to rural and urban local bodies, state level election commission as also finance commission and granting of mandatory status to the gram sabha, the bureaucrats are seen mere facilitators and promoters of development, and not regulators and directors. Within the theoretical format of democratic decentralization, bureaucracy is a catalyst for change rather than agent of change. So it is a significant step in eroding the overwhelming paternalistic authority hitherto enjoyed by bureaucracy.

Having crafted a qualitatively different role for the Panchayat Raj institutions, the Seventy third Amendment Act has substantially circumscribed the bureaucratic power especially in the developmental plans at the grass root level. In states like Maharashtra Gujarat, and West Bengal, the district collector/ magistrate, for instance, totally kept out of the Zilla Parishads while in Utter Pradesh and Bihar, they are allowed to attend meeting of the Panchayat samiti and its standing committee without any right to voice. Furthermore, the statutory recognition of gram sabhas as the focus of the local governance has radically altered the power structure at the grass roots level. Now, these gram sabhas are
authorized to discuss and suggest policies for development, identify beneficiaries for various development programmes, discuss Panchayat budget, and review and monitor the implementation of various developmental programmes. Moreover, the government decision to implement various development programmes including Jawahar Rozgar Yozana from the Eighth Five Plan onwards through the Panchayat has legitimized its role further. Involved in both the planning and execution of the programmes, relevant to the local needs, the gram sabha have become instruments diluting the bureaucratic monopoly in the localities. The growing involvement of the people in the Panchayat Raj institutions has made the concept of ‘peoples’ audit’ meaningful, that serves as a powerful check on the aberrations in bureaucratic functioning in the development sphere; be it the misappropriations of funds, false reporting or wrongful identification of beneficiaries.

As the Panchayat Raj happens to be one of the most effective instruments of ensuring the involvement of common people in the process of governance by guaranteeing them a role in the formulation and execution of policies and programmes of rural development, it has never been a favorite idea of the leaders for fear of losing their grip over the socio economic and political aspects of rural life having a bearing on their electoral fortunes. Hence, despite being a novel idea of democratic decentralization with potential of deepening the ethos of democracy and spirit of participatory governance, the operationalization of Panchayat Raj appears more to be a formalistic ritual rather than a experience in rural self governance.

After the passage of the Seventy third Constitutional Amendment Act, through the structural shortcomings of the Panchayat Raj institutions have seemingly
been removed to a great extent, the real challenge in the successful functioning of these bodies lie in changing outlook of the power brokers in government towards these institutions. If, for instance, the provision for time bound compulsory elections to these institutions have assured a continued existence for them, there still exist a number of dubious instrumentalities in the hands of both the politicians as well as bureaucrats to cripple the efficient functioning of these bodies. The need, therefore, appears for a concerted and sustained effort on the part of the stakeholders in the successful functioning of the Panchayat Raj institutions to remain ever vigilant against any move to dilute the efficiency of these bodies on the one hand, and start a campaign for further strengthening of the Panchayat Raj system in the country. On the other efficient bureaucracy cannot be a substitute for democratic decentralized government and local staffing is most desirable for local bodies.

The present study analyse the role of Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development in Karnataka.

**Significance of the Study:**

The significance of the work lies in analysis of role of the Panchayat Raj Institutions in rural development. The importance of the work is that it focuses on various rural development programmes adopted by Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development. Rural development programmes acquired a high degree of performance in the plans documents. It also helps the process of people participation in development programmes.
Objectives of the Study:

The study entitled “The role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Rural Development in Karnataka: A study” undertaken with the following objectives.

1. To examine the significance of rural development in Karnataka.
2. The purpose of the study is also to know the growth of Panchayat Raj institutions in Karnataka.
3. The study also intends to examine the implementation rural development programmes in Karnataka.
4. To understand the working of Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development.
5. To analyze the role of Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development.
6. To suggest measures to strengthen the role of Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development in Karnataka.

Hypothesis of the Study:

1. The Panchayat Raj institutions have become a training ground for leaders at local level.
2. Various welfare policies of government are being implemented through local bodies.
3. Panchayat Raj institutions are playing vital role in improving socio-economic conditions of rural people in Karnataka.

Review of Literature:

There is a very rich literature on Panchayat Raj in the form of books, Committee reports and publishing of articles in various journals. These studies
have covered both theoretical, as well as empirical parts. Main findings of these studies have been discussed in the following few pages.

Khanna (1956) deals with the structure, machinery and working of Panchayat Raj Institutions in India in historical perspective. He says that Panchayat Raj has been suffering from a crisis of confidence and a low level of self-esteem. The Panchayat Raj system also suffers from some other difficulties like inadequate financial resources, inequalitarian attitude of officials, mass illiteracy, ignorance, class consciousness, party strife and limited financial and administrative autonomy and lack of faith in grass roots democracy. But in spite of all these defects and deficiencies, the Institutional Panchayat Raj has added a ‘new dimension’ to rural development and has brought socio-economic democracy to the door-steps of the common man in Indian villages. The author suggests that the basic needs of Panchayat Raj are:

i) Sound, scientific and properly articulated structure of government and

ii) An effective administrative machinery geared up to operate without frictions, so that the Panchayat Raj Institutions can function as the organs of civic and socio-economic democracy, and instruments of rural development.

Mathur and Narian (1969)\(^8\) concentrate basically on two issues;

i) Panchayat Raj and democracy and

ii) The politico administrative aspects of Panchayat Raj.

They are of the view that there is a conflict between Panchayat Raj and parliamentary democracy. The need of close linkage between Panchayat Raj Institutions and community development approach is emphasized.
They conclude that the problem of official and non-official relationship is not so baffling as it is made out to be. They suggest that the training and education programme for the elected representative is essential for the success.

Sudesh Kumar Sharma (1976) has attempted to study the reforms in Panchayat Raj in the country since independence. The author has summed up analytically the major findings of the reports of the different committees, study teams etc, having a bearing on the problem of the democratic decentralization and Panchayat Raj Institutions. He has also indicated the emerging trends and the unfinished business. The study gives a brief but critical view of the various issues and inadequacies in an academic style.

Ashoka Mehta Committee (1978) was set up to enquire into the working of the Panchayat Raj institutions and to suggest measures for strengthening them so as to enable a decentralized planning and development to be effective. The committee suggested that the formulation of structure, functions and the utilizations of financial, administrative and human resources on Panchayat Raj Institutions should be determined on the emerging functional necessity of management of rural development. Further, it recommended a ‘two-tier model’ of Panchayat Raj instead of three-tier model of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee. These two-tiers were Zilla Parishad at district level and Mandal Panchayat at village level.

Hooja (1978) attempted to review the genesis of the twin concepts of Panchayat Raj and democratic decentralization in the context of their historical perspective and in the light of the development on the eve of independence and since. He suggests that there is a need for harmonious working relations
between the Panchayat Institutions and the district administration and the Panchayat Raj bodies have to work as mutually complimentary and supporting units of one and the same democratic administrations at the state level and not as rivals contenders for each others powers.

Bhargava (1979) attempted to analyse leadership in Panchayat Raj system in one of the districts Jhunjhunu of Rajasthan. He said that the profile of leadership in Panchayat Raj system shows perceptible differences from the model of traditional rural leadership and this leadership may be called nontraditional. The weaker sections do not get sufficient representation in these institutions. Finally, he suggested that there is a need of effective training for the grass roots leadership for the effective operation of local government system.

Darshankar (1979) discussed the interaction between caste and policies role of money, education and social rank in the working of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Marthwada region of Maharashtra State. He suggested that the success of Panchayat Raj largely depends on the leaders and they have to be deeply committed to the ideals of Panchayat Raj. Panchayat Raj has not brought all the expected benefits to the common man but has brought new changes in various fields.

Singh (1987) presents a historical view of the Panchayat Raj institutions in India, together with a discussion on the theoretical, organizational and functional dimensions of the Panchayat Raj. This study holds that the gap between theory and practice continued to remain. However, there are some striking points of the Panchayat Raj system in Bihar which the author refers to the Panchayat is a training ground at the grass roots level which provides an
opportunity for the transformation of local leadership into district and state level leadership. The panchayat remained an institution led by local bureaucracy, and hence of self-dependence and self-reliance among the rural masses could not develop. And without the necessary financial backing the panchayat remained hollow in its functions. The attitude of the state government towards the Panchayat Raj Institutions remained generally indifferent.

Indira Hirway (1989)\textsuperscript{15} in her article, ‘Panchayat Raj at Cross Roads’ examines the inadequacies of these concepts and the potential of Panchayat Raj in our political system. She has analyzed the experiences of different states and drawn lessons from these experiences. Then she has critically examined the 64\textsuperscript{th} Amendment Bill and made some inferences about the implication of strengthening Panchayat Raj in country. She concludes that Panchayat Raj structure, set up in our country is not doing very well and that there is a need to revitalize them. Changing the existing structure, or at least strengthening the Position of the success of Panchayat Raj. She says that the 64\textsuperscript{th} Amendment Bill was at best partial and weak attempt to save Panchayat Raj. It was more likely to be misused by the center than help the process of decentralization.

The analysis of the above related literature shows that all the above mentioned works have been macro in nature and no attempt has been made to probe the working of Panchayat Raj Institutions at micro level especially in the backward regions like Gulbarga district. Hence, in order to bridge the gap in the contemporary literature the present study intends to probe the role of Panchayat Raj institutions in Rural development in Karnataka.
Methodology:

For the present work empirical, historical and analytical methods employed. Both primary and secondary sources of material used in the present study. Data and information collected both from government documents and published literatures available with different libraries of Karnataka. The Primary data collected by administering the structured questionnaire to the randomly scaled elected members of the Zilla Panchayat, Taluka Panchayat and Gram Panchayat. Apart from these sources the research material available in the internet also used in the present study.

Sources of data:

For the comprehensive study and research about the Panchayat Raj institutions in rural development. Both primary and secondary data used. The primary data consist of statement of the local leaders. Secondary data used in the form of published material i.e./ books, journals ,etc.

Limitations of the Study:

The present study is confined only to the role of Panchayat Raj institutions in Rural development in Karnataka. It deals only with nature, growth in general and role of the panchayat Raj institutions in rural development in Karnataka. However this study discusses in brief role of leaders and their attitude at local level.
**Research Design:**

The proposed study tentatively organized into six chapters as follow.

Chapter I: Introduction

Chapter II: Rural development in India: A Historical perspective.


Chapter IV: Rural Development Programmes.

Chapter V: Role of Panchayat Raj Institutions in Rural Development in Karnataka

Chapter VI: Summary and conclusion
NOTES AND REFERENCES

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5. The Hindu, New Delhi, 18 August 2007.


15. Indira Hirwary “Panchayat Raj at Grassroots”, The Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXIV.