The term Rural Development is a subset of the broader term ‘Development’. Development is a universally cherished goal of individuals, families, communities and nations all over the world. Development is also natural in the sense that all forms of life on Planet Earth have an inherent urge to survive and develop. Given these two attributes, i.e., its universal supremacy as a goal and its natural occurrence, development deserves a scientific study and analysis. Hence it is not surprising that the subject of development has been studied by scholars of all faiths, ideologies and disciplines. So much has been written and said about rural development, that one finds it difficult to justify yet another book on this subject. However, it is my convention that there is need for a textbook on rural development a book that churns out valuable insights and practicable lessons from the vast literature that is available on the subject. This book is intended to be a book of that sort. That such a book was needed was amply evident from the first edition of the book that had a long innings of over a decade. Having said this, I now proceed to examine some of the commonly used connotations and definitions of development in general, and rural development in particular. The objective is to arise at a definition that is easy to understand and use.

**Concepts and Connotations of Rural Development:**

Development is a subjective and value – loaded concept, and hence there cannot be a consensus as to its meaning. The term is used differently in diverse contexts. It basically means ‘unfolding’, ‘revealing’, or ‘opening up’ something
which is latent. When applied to human beings, it therefore means `unfolding’ or `opening up’ their potential powers. Generally speaking, the term development implies a change that is desirable. Since what is desirable at a particular time, place and in a particular culture may not be desirable at other places, or at other times at the same place and in the same cultural milieu, it is impossible to think of a universally acceptable definition of development. At best, development in the context of society could be conceptualized as a set of desirable societal objectives which society seeks to achieve. Thus defined, development is cherished by all individuals, communities and nations, irrespective of their culture, religion and spatial location.¹

These days, sustainable development has become a buzzword. According to the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987:43), `sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’. In simple words, sustainable development is a process in which the set of desirable societal objectives, or the development index, does not decrease over time. Constancy of natural capital stock, including natural resources and the environment, is a necessary condition for sustainable development. The set of `sufficient conditions’ includes an appropriate institutional framework and governance system for implementation of sustainable development policy.

The term rural development connotes overall development of rural areas with a view to improve the quality of life of rural people. In this sense, it is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept, and encompasses the development of agriculture and allied activities, village and cottage industries and crafts, socio-economic infrastructure, community services and facilities, and
above all, the human resources in rural areas. As a phenomenon, rural development is the end result of interactions between various physical, technological, economic, socio cultural and institutional factors. As a strategy, it is designed to improve the economic and social well being of a specific group of people the rural poor. As a discipline, it is multi disciplinary in nature, representing an intersection of agricultural, social, behavioral, engineering and management sciences. In the words of Robert Chambers (1983:147).

Rural Development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural women and men, to gain for them selves and heir children more of what they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of rural development. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants, and the landless.  

Thus the term rural development may be used to imply any one of the above mentioned connotations. To avoid ineffective floundering among the myriad definitions, shall define rural development as: `A process leading to sustainable improvement in the quality of life of rural people, especially the poor'.

In additional to economic growth, this process typically involves changes in popular attitudes, and in many cases even in customs and beliefs. In a nutshell, the process of rural development must represent the entire gamut of change by which a social system moves away from a state of life perceived as `unsatisfactory' towards a materially and spiritually better condition of life. The process of rural development may be compared with a train in which reach coach pushes the one ahead of it, and is in turn pushed by the one behind, but it
takes a powerful engine to make the whole train move. The secret of success in rural development lies in identifying, and if needed, developing a suitable engine to attach to the train. There are no universally valid guidelines to identify appropriate engines of rural development, if at all they exist. It is a choice that is influenced by time, space and culture.

**Basic Elements of Rural Development:**

Whatever the geographic, culture and historical stage of development of a society, there are at least three basic elements which are considered to constitute the `true' meaning of rural development. They are as follows (Todaro 1977:16-18).

1) **Basic Necessities of Life:**

People have certain basic needs, with out which it would be impossible (or very difficult) for them to survive. The basic necessities include food, clothes, shelter, basic literacy, primary health care and security of life and property. When any one or all them are absent or in critically short supply, may state that a condition of absolute underdevelopment' exists. Provision of the basic necessities of life to every body is the primary responsibility of all economies, whether they are capitalist, socialist, or mixed. In this sense, may claim that economic growth (increased per capita availability of basic necessities) is a necessary condition for improvement of the `quality of life' of rural people, which is rural development.

2) **Self-Respect:**

Every person and every nation seeks some sort of self respect, dignity, or honour. Absence or denial of self respect indicates lack of development.
3) **Freedom:**

In this context, freedom refers to political or ideological freedom, economic freedom and freedom from social servitude. As long as a society is bound by the servitude of men to nature, ignorance, other men, institutions, and dogmatic beliefs, it cannot claim to have achieved the goal of `development'. Servitude in any form reflects a state of underdevelopment.

The new economic view of development considers reduction or elimination of poverty, inequality and unemployment as an important index of development. Seers (1969:3) succinctly tackled the basic question of the meaning of development when he wrote:

The questions to ask a country's development are therefore: What has been happening to poverty? What has been happening to unemployment? What has been happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined from high level, then, beyond doubt, this has been period of development of the country concerned. If one or two of these central problems have been growing worse, especially if all three have, it would be strange to call the result `development' even if per capital income doubled.

**Growth Versus Development:**

While economic growth is an essential component of development, it is not the only one, as development is not a purely economic phenomenon. In the ultimate sense, it must encompass more than the material and financial sides of peoples lives. Development should therefore, be perceived as multidimensional process, involving the reorganization and reorientation of both economic and social systems. In addition to improvements in the level and
distribution of incomes and output, it involves radical changes in institutional, social and administrative structures. Finally, although development is usually defined in a national context, its widespread realization may necessitate fundamental modifications of the international economic, social and political systems as well. The Vedic prayer `sarve sukhinaha bhavantu, sarve santu niramayaha'. i.e., `may everybody (in this universe) be happy and healthy', highlights the global and multidimensional nature of development.4

Why Rural Development:

Since time immemorial, India has been, still continues to be, and will remain in the foreseeable future, a land of village communities. As a matter of fact, the village was the basic unit of administration as far back as the Vedic Age; there is a reference to gramini (village leader) in the Rig Veda. The predominantly rural character of India's national economy is reflected in the very high proportion of its population living in rural areas; it was 89 percent in 1901, 83 percent in 1951, 80 percent in 1971 and 74 percent in 1991. With more than 700 million of its people living in rural areas, and with the rural sector contributing about 29 percent of its gross domestic product, no strategy of socio-economic development for India that neglects rural people and rural area can be successful. The rural character of the economy, and the need for regeneration of rural life, was stressed by Mahatma Gandhi (Anonymous 1978 : 2, 31). He wrote in Harijan (4th April 1936).

India is to be found not in its few cities but in its 7,00,000 villages. But we town dwellers have believed that India is to be found in its towns and the villages were created to minister to our needs. We have hardly paused to
enquire if those poor folk get sufficient to eat and clothe themselves with and whether they have a roof to shelter themselves from sun and rain.

He further wrote in Harijan (29th August 1936), `I would say that if the village perishes, India would perish too. It will be no more India. Her won mission in the world will get lost. The revival of village life is possible only when it is no more exploited’.

**Rising Expectations and Development:**

The common man India, as also in other developing countries, expects a higher standard of living for himself, his family, his community and his nation. Particular expectations, of course, differ from person to person and from region to region, but the expectation of a marked improvement in material conditions of life is general throughout the world. People want and expect to have better diet, clothes, houses, education, a secure life and freedom from servitude. This is the revolution of expectations that has swept over the Third World Countries.⁵

There are many explanations for this phenomenon. First, the demonstration effect of the rural elite, urban rich and foreign tourists engaging in ostentations consumption of exotic and luxurious goods has distorted the consumption and utility functions of the poor. Second, films, radio, television and advertising have exposed the masses to modern gadgets and life styles and have thus aroused their expectations. Third, local and national politicians have assured the rural poor of the modern amenities of life, if they would vote for them. Fourth, the central governments, have declared time and again that the eradication of poverty is their major policy goal. Through these media, the
common man has first learned about the new products, gadgets and services, then come to want them, and now to demand them.

The economies of most developing countries (including India) cannot possibly fulfill these expectations in the immediate future, and there is bound to be a collision between rising expectations and economic reality. The outcome will vary from country to country, but it will certainly involve disillusionment, demoralization, agitation and political upheaval. It is this that makes rapid agricultural and economic development a national imperative.

Development and Change:

Development is both a cause and a consequence of change. There is a two way relationship between them, i.e., development influences, and is influenced by, a change. The change implies a physical, technological, economic, social, cultural, attitudinal, organizational, or political change. Whereas all manifestations of development can be traced to some change somewhere, sometimes not all changes lead to development; a change may be either for the better (development), or the worse (retrogressions).

In the context of rural development, a change may be considered to be an instrument which can be used to promote rural development. In India, the introduction of technological changes in the mid sixties (New high yielding varieties of crops, fertilizers, improved farm machinery and pesticides) led to the so called Green Revolution in agriculture. Similarly, technological innovations, such as modern milk processing and feed processing plants, artificial insemination of dairy animals, and organizational innovations such as the Anand pattern dairy cooperatives introduced in India on a large scale in the early
seventies under the Operation Flood programme, contributed significantly to the modernization and development of the dairy industry of the country. Elsewhere, such as in Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China, agricultural development was largely a result of institutional reforms, especially and reforms and technological advances. Kari Marx was one of the great advocates of revolutionary (socio-economic) change as an instrument of development.

Human Beings as the Cause and Consequence of Development:

Human beings are both the cause and consequence of development, it is the human factory that is the pivot of the process of development. Though the study of a human being is basic to the study of development, it cannot be of a human being in isolation, but rather of human beings in relation to their fellows, or of humans in society and in their environment.

It is the creation of conditions, both material and spiritual, which enable the human being as an individual, and the human being as a species, to be at here / his best. Those who control a human being’s livelihood, control a human being. A person’s freedom is illusory when he/she depends upon others for the right to work and the right to eat. Equally, a nation is not independent if its economic resources are controlled by another nation. Political independence is meaningless, if a national does not control the means by which its citizens can earn their living.

In other words, human development follows from economic development, only if the later is achieved on the basis of the equality and human dignity of all those involved. Human dignity cannot be given to a human being by the kindness of others; indeed, it can be destroyed by kindness which emanates
from an act of charity, for human dignity involves equality, freedom and relations
of mutual respect among humans; it depends on responsibility, and on
a conscious participation in the life of the society in which a human being
lives and works.

The whole structure of national societies and of international society is
therefore relevant to the development of people. There are few societies which
can be said to serve this purpose; there are few, if any, which both accept and
are organized to serve social justice, in what has been called the Revolution of
Rising expectations.

The greatest advances in technology and economic growth have been
achieved under capitalism. But the decisions pertaining to what goods shall be
produced, and how they shall be produced, are made by a small number of
people who have control over land and capital. The determining factor in their
decision making is whether the activity will yield profit, power, or prestige to
them, as owners of land or capital. The needs of humankind are secondary, if
they are considered at all.

There is no profit in producing cheap houses, so they are not produced;
there is no money for schools and hospitals, but enough for five star hotels and
luxury apartments. The result is a few people living in luxury, using the wealth
produced by humans for their own grandeur and to ensure their own power. At
the same times, masses of men, women and children are reduced to beggary,
squalor, and to the humiliation of that disease the soul destroying insecurity
which arises out of their enforced poverty.⁷
Let us be quite clear that, if we are interested in a human being as an individual, we must express this by our interest in the society of which those individuals are members, for humans are shaped by the circumstances in which they live. If they are denied dignity, they will act accordingly. If they are treated solely as a dispensable means of production, they will become soulless ‘hands’, to whom life is a matter of doing as little work as possible, and then escaping into the illusion of happiness and pride through vice.

**Some Dilemmas in Development:**

Literature on development abounds in a variety of dilemmas and dogmas, such as rural versus urban development, agricultural versus industrial development, primacy of capital versus labour, and natural / autonomous versus induced / planned development. A brief critiques of these dilemmas seems in order to clarify some of the issues.

**Rural Versus Urban Development:**

Economic development in western countries has been associated with growing urbanization, as reflected in the increasing proportion of the urban population. Hence, there is a tendency among economists to consider urbanization as an index of development. Growing urbanization is obviously the consequence of the growing concentration of infrastructural networks and capital intensive industrial enterprises in urban centers. This type of concentration has resulted in the existence of what is known in the literature on the economics of development as ‘dualism’, or coexistence of two separate economic subsystems in an economy, in many developing countries. On one hand, there exists in the economy a small but highly modern and developed urban subsector, which
absorbs most of the material, financial and educated and talented man power resources; on the other hand a very large but traditional and under developed rural subsector, characterized by widespread poverty, unemployment and low productivity, which forms the majority of the population. In many developing countries, both the subsectors coexist, but without those linkages between them that were once the main factors which contributed to the development of today’s developed countries.

At the other extreme, there is another dogma rapidly emerging in many developing countries, that rural development is a prerequisite for overall development, and hence it deserves the highest priority in terms of allocation of resources. In their enthusiasm to promote the cause of rural development, the proponents of this school of thought usually tend to either disregard or underplay the linkages between the rural and the urban subsectors of the economy. What is needed is a new approach to development, which explicitly recognizes the interlink ages and complementarily between the rural and the urban subsectors, an provides for integrating them completely.

**Agricultural Versus India Industrial Development:**

Closely analogous to the rural versus urban development dilemma, is the dogma that industrialization alone can modernize agriculture and thereby raise agricultural productivity, wage rates and provide employment to labor displaced by mechanization of agriculture. This has led many development economists to associate development with industrialization. Following this dogma, many developing countries have established highly capital intensive and sophisticated industrial enterprises, similar to those in developed countries. Such efforts,
however, have often led to biter disappointment when the desired results failed to materialize. Such projects are mere showcases, whose contribution to development is negligible, and some times even negative, because they are built at the expense of enter prizes that meet the basic needs of people. Nations with high agricultural potential spend enormous resources on agricultural imports and depend heavily on imported technology, capital and management. At the same time, local agriculture stagnates and nutritional standards remain far lower than in the advanced countries. Distribution of income is tilted in faour of industrialists against farmers, workers and consumers.

At the other extreme is agricultural fundamentalism, which holds that in the initial stages of development when per capita incomes are low, agriculture alone can serve as an instrument of development, and that increased agricultural productivity is a prerequisite to increased income and industrialization. The proponents of this dogma argue for allocation of more resources and attention to agriculture, rather than to industry. They do not, however, realize that agriculture cannot develop alone, and that concomitant development of industry and supporting infrastructure is essential not only for the growth of the national economy, but for the advancement of agriculture itself. The non agricultural sector must be developed to the extent that it is able to provide the agricultural sector with new farm inputs and services vital to its development, as also to absorb the manpower rendered surplus as a result of increased labou productivity in agriculture.⁹

Agricultural fundamentalism has generally resulted in growth without development, mainly because of lack of linkages between the agricultural and
non agricultural sectors, and partly because of distribution of income being skewed in favour of big land lords.

The establishment of small and less capital intensive industrial enterprises in rural areas, along with introduction of new technology in agriculture, is likely to establish linkages between agriculture and industry. The Israeli strategy of integrating agricultural and industrial sectors is worth emulating. In Israel, industrial enterprises were set up in rural areas, along with the introduction of more efficient methods of agricultural production. Initially, the industrial enterprises included mostly services and industries connected with agriculture, such as feed mix plants, factories for processing agricultural produce and for production of tools and various accessories. Most of these enterprises are owned, either fully or in part, by the farmers themselves. In course of time, the scope of industrial enterprises was widened to include activities completely unconnected with agriculture, such as jewellery manufacture and ceramic (Weitz 1971).

Capital Versus Labour Dogma:

This is a legacy inherited by today’s development economists from their predecessors in the developed counties, who considered capital to be the key instrument of development. The Harrod Domar model represents a typical example of this dogma. In this model, the rate of growth in expressed as the product of the savings rate and the output capital ration. Under the assumptions that capital and labour cannot be substituted for each other, and that labour is in surplus supply, capital becomes the over riding constraint on economic growth.
This dogma received a further fillip from those techno economists who held that all new technology is embodied in capital.

Capital fundamentalism has been blindly accepted by development economists and planners in the developing countries. This has led to the promulgation of a number of policies in these countries, all aimed at increasing savings, redistributing income from the workers to the capitalists, granting monopoly rights to national and multinational corporations, transferring resources from the private to the public sector, increasing dependence on foreign aid and loans, and under pricing capital, particularly foreign exchange, for capital goods. This has resulted in a number of adverse effects on the economics of these nations. For example, under pricing foreign exchange for capital goods has killed the incentive to develop labour intensive technologies adapted to domestic needs and circumstances, an has led to premature and excessive mechanization in a number of sectors, resulting in unemployment of labour and underutilization of other domestic resources.

Capital fundamentalism has extended to cover human capital formation as well. Higher education is highly subsidized in most developing countries, with the result that millions of college and university graduates are added annually to the pool of the unemployed white collar proletariat. In India, enormous investment has been made in the institutes of higher leaning, particularly in the fields of engineering, technology, agriculture, medicine and management. Many of the graduates of these institutes usually do not like the work environment and compensation rates prevailing in the country, and seek jobs abroad. Thus the scarce resources invested in their education and training are lost to the country. It seems that at this stage of India’s economic
and technological development, we need more institutes to train barefoot agricultural and other technicians, engineers, doctors and rural managers, rather than institutes for highly advanced training. Similarly, one wonders why we should produce more college and university graduates in disciplines like arts, science, commerce, agriculture and veterinary science than we need. The demand for higher education could be brought down to match the availability of jobs, by pricing it at its real resources cost, which is markedly higher than the present cost. In the USA and other Western countries, most students terminate their studies at the higher school level and become self employed. But their training is broad based and highly practical and relevant to their context, with the result that high school graduates are able and confident to set up and manage their own small business or take up wage paid jobs. And make our education less capital-intensive and more relevant to our requirements. We need to thoroughly overhaul our present education policy, which has become outdated and irrelevant in the context of our changed environment. More emphasis needs to be placed on vocationalisation of education.\textsuperscript{10}

**Autonomous Versus Induced Development:**

In every country, some development takes place naturally or autonomously over time, but its level and pace may not be adequate to maintain a reasonably satisfactory standard of living. In such situations, some sort of intervention is needed to speed up the pace of natural development. Development planning is one of the forms of intervention that has become a fad in many developing countries of the world, and is considered a magic door to development. In fact, even the advanced countries have come to realize the need for some sort of planning or government intervention in the economic
processes. It seems that there is a growing consensus around the statement that any planning is better than no planning at all, and decentralized planning is better than centralized planning.

However, realize that planning can make a positive contribution only if it facilitates the achievement of development objectives more rapidly and more efficiently than if development followed natural forces. It is now becoming increasingly apparent that the development effort cannot be left to the government alone; it must be shared by private, cooperative, corporate and other non-governmental organizations and agencies, and above all by the people themselves. Planning by the government should complement and supplement the efforts of individuals and non-governmental organizations.

An introspection of Development Administration in Asia and other third world countries, makes us to discern three important operational models and strategies: each with its distinct ideological promises and orientations. A number of countries adopted the Western paradigm of modernization which was the capitalist model of growth with some local concessions. Others chose the revolutionary path of nation-building on the models of the Soviet Republic, People’s Republic of China and other post – World War II Socialist countries. Still others tried to develop independent models of their own, considering the national requirements and situational choices.

Panchayati Raj in India an indigenous model of development since time immemorial, manifests both the national sensibility and ostentation, it is evolved through the ages, acquiring a definite programme of action. The history of Panchayati Raj is synonymous with history of the ‘man in the street’ in
independent India to be free from want, hunger and fear, let alone modernization. If Gandhiji’s dream were to be a reality, Panchayati Raj institutions should have created a new leadership in the distant countryside and made him the true sovereign of the country. These institutions should have marked the beginning of an end of all the trials and tribulations of the masses.

The problem of decentralization, which the Panchayati Raj institutions stand for, has been at the core of political philosophy and constitutional study, throughout man’s history of ideas. It is even at present a living concern – social and political, in our country and in many parts of the world both developed and developing, the intellectual roots may be diverse. The motivating factors may arise from different situations. It has been commonly accepted that psychologically, if not always institutionally, decentralization provides the necessary avenue to the individual citizen and the community for their genuine and maximum self expression as well as contribution to the social good. The hoary past and the recent past indicate that, too great a centralization results in delay, increasing costs and red-tapism. It limits initiative, discourages innovation and becomes a bottleneck in the process of development.

Democratic Decentralization which was re-christened as Panchayati Raj was discovered to supply the interest and excite local initiative in the field of development. The shift from community development to Panchayati Raj was a shift room silent revolution to most revolutionary stage in administration and development. It was transitory metamorphosis of the Indian politico-administrative scene. The concept innate in Panchayati Raj institutions is not a totally new phenomenon in India, it was practiced successfully in may third world countries. The transformation of community development programme into
Panchayati Raj movement shall not be construed that both are synonymous. Although there is a close relationship between the two movements, they are altogether different and represent different political values.¹¹

Panchayati Raj system is an innovative mechanism to bridge the yawning gap between the decision making centres and the centres of action. For administrative de-concentration is no remedy because administrative powers and responsibility remain centralized in the State Government. Decentralization through Panchayati Raj institutions is the way to combine popular responsibility with dispersal of decision making powers.

Panchayati Raj institutions are intended to be the schools for leaning lessons of democratic responsibility in political education. It is to prepare the citizens for responsible living and to develop leaders who could take control of democratic institutions at State and national level. “It is primarily with a view to improvement in administration that this measure is put forward and supported. It is chiefly designed as an instrument of political and popular education.”

Panchayati Raj institutions increase the effectiveness of the democratic system by filling up the organizational gaps between the mass and the governing national elite. It creates a base for the plural system of power because the various opposition parties might succeed in winning local seats of power, although they might not succeed in capturing the State Government or national seat of political power. By the very structural necessity, a politics of concerted action through a plural system of power cannot be extremist unless the plural system becomes so much confusing that its suppression, suspension and control becomes necessary to restore order and unity.
Panchayati Raj institutions are viewed as better administrative organs for development purposes at basic level i.e., Development Administration. The primary choice in the form of organization political and administration, suitable for conflict management and stability and which can be viable for development, is heavily conditioned by the environment. Development has to be managed in the region which requires involvement of the people for the success of all rural development programmes.

It is also very much thought of socio-political change through Panchayati Raj institutions. A new consciousness of social and political rights has been aroused among the masses in general. Despite the age old domination of Kulaks and other rural elites in all the rural affairs, others also started questioning their policies and new demands are put on the administration of the village committees.

In a feudal rural set-up, agrarian relationship of the majority of the people is being deprived of having any social interaction with the few landholding families, which also control economic interests of the larger sections of the society. Thus, they hardly have any opportunity to interact nor do they desire to have any forum to represent their grievances, let alone growing aspirations or expectations. Panchayati Raj institutions have made the rural feudal oligarchy to understand the helplessness of their losing ascendancy in village affairs and the voiceless masses, who have been amorphous to realize their growing strength. The general public is becoming sensitive to the political situation around them.

The case for political decentralization is as old as the concept of democracy. From the days of direct democracy in ancient Greece to the present
day advocates of "Bringing government closer to the people", the concern has been to bring together the amateur and the expert respectively represented by the elected and the appointed executives. The two are to work together because the elected executive reflects what the people could bear and thereby tempers this amateur’s enthusiasm as regards visionary schemes has to be tempered by the expert’s view of feasibility and cost aspects. Blending the amateur’s idealistic enthusiasm with the expert’s executive ability is the art of optimizing democracy.

During the past few decades many authoritative reports and studies have endorsed the fundamental importance of effective and efficient local governance. Moreover, it has been widely observed that countries with particularly strong and effective local government systems have been much more dynamic locally than most traditionally centralized ones.

Territorial decentralization can alleviate all these defects, inaccurate and weak field implementation, urban bias and favourable situation to large-scale industrial and infrastructural projects. Also, decentralization, spreading investment widely, improving field execution, making plans more sensitive to popular demands and needs and encouraging the integration of the activities of central departments in mutually supportive approaches to local problems, cause the evolution of new society with incremental development process. Furthermore, it is very often cheaper to employ local personnel than to send out civil servants from the capital, those civil servants require relatively high salaries and allowances, and their travel and transport expenses are costly: a local person often costs much less: this can release potentially important resources for the public benefit.
Again, local materials and technology are often more appropriate and more economical than those transported expensively from headquarters. Decentralized agencies can be aware of such opportunities for avoiding the extravagant use of scarce public resources. In contrast centralization is a negative power. It stops local action, but cannot promote local innovation, which is essential for local development.

As between the State and Local Self-governments, decentralization is both political and administrative. The political element is enshrined in the constitution creating Local Self-Government in urban and rural areas. The statutes of the constitution demarcate functions and resources for the fulfillment of tasks. The local bodies do not enjoy the constitutionally demarcated autonomy of units in a federal set-up, as they are the creatures of the higher level government.

The enveloping societies offer another spectrum of decentralization whether administrative or political. Administratively, the colonial legacy and accountability to the legislature subject the lower level authorities to a close check and supervision as well as innumerable demands for minute details in information. Political decentralization may result in the really effective local self governing municipalities or Panchayats becoming strong centres of political activity adversely affecting the higher level political leadership. Devolution of power, authority and responsibility along with adequate financial resources would have some durable strength and would channelize the impulse for self help on a continued and organized basis.
India Democracy:

The democratic tradition in India may be traced back to times immemorial, the Vedic period and Buddhist republican institutions; it has been very discouraging to note the trends and tendencies of post-independent phase, howsoever it is considered to be infant. Since Independence Indian political priorities have hardly been changed. Dynastic democracy has taken roots in the soil. There has been clear demarcation and mutual non-co-operation between union government and the opposition ruled State Governments. Both the Union Government and the state counterparts have rarely manifested to draw any policy programmes to alleviate rural backwardness.

India has been and continues to be, predominantly rural country. There are 5,78,413 villages with 74 per cent of the population, i.e, 750 million lives in villages. It is also to be noted that 48 percent of the population live below the poverty line. Fifty years of lopsided development, a direct consequence of centralized government and planning, has rendered the Indian State weak, vulnerable to onslaughts form a variety of sources and unable to meet even the minimum needs and expectations of the people. Meanwhile the institutions designed to serve and democratic process of nation building have been allowed to decay. With this the organic ties between the government at the centre and the people inhabiting this vast sub continental policy have been eroded.

In the medieval, atmosphere of Indian politics, where the ideology of reason comes constantly into conflict with the mythology of Individual infallibility and omniscience, it is not easy to promote a scientific approach to the philosophy of the Government. Nowhere else in this wide world are reality and
rationality subordinated so often as in India to political exhibitionism, intellectual
timidity or pretty manipulations. The theology of power based on the fantasies of
image and politics and the need for new myths to sustain them often
degenerates into the cynical assumption that there is no personality or cause
larger than one's own interest in public life.

Democracy in all the countries, of late is moving towards centralization
much against its tenets; Third World countries and other developing countries
have been showing much dangerous signals of shift towards authoritarian
repression systems. The widening hiatus between the power centres and the
masses has further weakened the process. The vast majority of the rural
population has to obey the decisions taken by the few people who live in
metropolitan centres representing alien culture and ethos. This dichotomy
resulted in all the welfare schemes and development programmeaes launched by
the Union Government and State units, irrespective of their political complexion
going unnoticed and made no impact on the development of the `man in the
street'. This scenario is common in all the fronts – agricultural, housing, health,
educational etc., The crux of the issue is that the entire post independent period
has been an experiment at structuring political power on the basis of a strong
central authority.\textsuperscript{12}

It is with this background and experience that the longing for
decentralized and genuinely political system in India is advocated by well-
meaning intelligentsia and enlightened leadership. This may be a good
beginning before regional \textit{Satraps} and parochial tendencies disintegrate the
political system. It is also to be viewed in the wake o caste and regional upsurge
in various place causing the erosion of the authority of the Indian State.
Democracy requires to build a structure of participation by the people. This can drive away all the social maladies which are deep rooted in Indian system, which cannot be removed through technological means. However well intentioned the programmes may be, they fail to reach the ordinary men in the distant countryside, when they are thrust upon by the higher centres of power. The said structure of participation is to be inherent which alone is effective in strengthening the legitimacy of the democratic process. Indian democracy when it is at a trying period, the credibility is an article of faith and enables the people to participate in shaping their collective future. Institutional innovation like this has tremendous responsiveness and sensitivity to the people and their felt needs.

Though India is a democracy and federal system, local Governments, both urban and rural, have not been given proper and important place in the Federal system. Indian federalism is incomplete and inadequate without the existence of effective local Government particularly at the level of villages, talukas and districts. Federalism has to be nourished by strengthening the forces of decentralization at the state level and local levels. Local Government must be considered as an extension of federal idea.”

Decentralization:

“A great Society” to quote James MacGregor Burns. “needs not consensus but creative leadership and creative opposition. It needs the sting of challenge in a society rich in diversity and in a politics rich in dissent”, a federal system with decentralized administration meets all these challenges.
“The issue of decentralization is more complex in concept and practice than is generally acknowledged”. Administration in all the organizations is interested in realizing the desired results, to prove its existence and continuance. There may be failures in this desired objective due to various factors mainly environmental and external. May a time failures on the part of organization attributed to too much of centralization of authority and absence of fixing of proper and specific responsibilities at various levels. Authorities at different levels complain about lack of adequate power. Despite, “delegation of authority and power to subordinates, is always viewed with mistrust and doubt”, partly the reluctance of the higher echelons to abdicate their power and partly the organizational weaknesses, are to be taken note of power sharing with others, results in insecurity among higher ups; it may be lack of faith or confidence in the competence or dependability of subordinates may lead, however, to the centralization process to be further strengthened.

Theoretically, James Fesler has classified four different approaches to understand decentralization. The doctrinal approach, political approach, administrative approach and the dual role approach.

The political character of decentralization is gaining momentum with the raising expectation of the people and the increasing accessibility of the new means of communications. The field units of government were created and vitalized in the wake of the introduction of Community development Programmes in India, within a framework of autonomy. Later stage of decentralization in the shape of devolution to local self governing bodies was the beginning of establishing autonomous governments at the periphery. Field units normally function as agents of either Central or State Governments, maintaining
organizational continuity. Whereas local self-governing institutions elected through popular franchise are detached units from the Central or State Government and result in organizational discontinuity.

Decentralization in administration is attributed to efficiency also. Field level administrative units through a process of deconcentration are to do field level decision making and prompt problem solving. Decentralization in administration might assure clarity of authority and orderliness of operations. Most of the programmes for the development of the rural community can show better results if the people’s institutions like the Panchayats are fully involved in the decision making process. The experience of developing countries shows that when local institutions are effectively organized on democratic lines and are vested with sub-staintial power of action based on their felt and real needs, they are capable of unleashing strong resources of initiative and enthusiasm, thereby making the takes of development easier.

The decentralization in the modern democratic civilization increases the efficiency of the political system as a whole by reducing the scope for abuse of power and costly mistakes incidental to excessive centralization.

History indicates that at an early stage of economic development, the tendency is to adopt a centralized form of management, which can mobilize the resources and energies of all concerned more effectively and produce a comparatively high level of efficiency in the short run. As the economic develops and the functions of government expand, it is no longer possible for the Central guidance cluster to deal with all the day-to-day administrative problems and to meet the critical situations which are constantly arising. It is generally recognized
that too great a concentration of problems upon the “Central guidance cluster causes delay, increases costs, reduces efficiency, limits initiative, discourages innovation and causes the cluster itself to become a bottleneck in the process of development.”

The concept of rural development as reflected in the various rural development programmes formulated since planning began, has undergone change from time to time, judging from the approach adopted in their formulation.

The Community Development Programme introduced to promote decision making at the local level was well conceived and designed. Besides, it was comprehensive in approach and had several facets. It has succeeded to the extent of creating awareness among the people in the rural areas. However, it wanot able to cover everybody, especially the lower sections of the rural society whose need was greater than members of the upper classes and castes.

There have been many attempts to widen the developmental orbit to give more opportunities for the bypassed regions and households for active participation in the developmental process.

It is generally conceded that rural development strategies pursued during 1950’s and 160’s in India promoted the development of ‘favourable’ regions and farm groups. The fruits of development have been mostly availed of by the better endowed areas and the better off members of the rural society, bypassing other regions and other households. This has been called as development dualism or enclave development.
There has occurred in recent years an important shift in emphasis in rural development strategy from agricultural growth to betterment of the poor. Efforts have been made to reorient the grassroots of administrative and organizational set up with a view to delivering a synchronized package of inputs and services to the rural poor at the ground level.

Creating consciousness and taking the perception and needs of the people into account institutional charges, technological innovations and an efficient delivery system are important components of rural development. However, to make it a participative process, devolution of power at the local level is necessary and should be accelerated at a faster rate if we want democratic participation in decision making to be a success in India.¹⁵

“There are three important streams related to rural development. Government initiative, popular movement for rural development and peasant struggles, have helped to identify certain problem areas and workout certain approaches which underscoring the importance and urgency of rural development.” The question of rural development and the plight of the peasantry assumed a significant part in the national movement as it developed, broadened and deepened. But it also lent a certain amount of ambivalence and platitudinousness to the method and approach to rural development which lingered beyond the active phase of the freedom struggle. The automaticity of rural development as an integral part of the national development was assured.

The increasing commercialization of agriculture, renewed emphasis on rural industrialization and upgradation of skills, development of remunerative non-farm enterprises like fisheries, piggeries, poultries and above all, milk
farming, electrification and energization of dug wells and tube wells and considerable enhancement of minor irrigation facilities are some of the development which would make it possible to view the development prospects of rural India.\textsuperscript{16}

Development of rural India is a two way flow process with satisfactory local finances and technical expertise and institutional supervision flowering to the villages and individual villagers belonging to all sections of the rural economy and rural society on the one hand, and on the other hand local or village produced output, flowering out of one rural locality to other rural localities as well as to non rural localities. Thus, Panchayati Raj institutions have to be equipped founder take `development management' under conditions of rapid changes, continuous growth and sustained innovations in all sphere as of rural life.

`A phenomenal increase in spatial scatter of rural development' is envisaged by the Ashoka Mehta Committee Report because of the emerging dynamics of development and increasing rural orientation of plan investments. It has increased beyond the capacity of the existing machinery for development administration and in the future the existing `State Village Pipelines' of administration will not be adequate for implementation of much larger, and ore varied and pervasive programmes. Further, the rural India in the days ahead will have a developmental momentum which has been steadily gaining strength since the fifties propelling the rural economy towards economic diversification the objective of which is purposeful social change and rural development. The impact of science and technology in agriculture, allied sectors and in small industries is such that a large number of individual families are drawn into its
vortex. This underscores high level technical support to them and local level organization.

The Panchayati Raj system has not been given a chance although it has had many achievements to its credit, particularly in the field of rural development, it became a process of development seed drilling in the Indian social, making an average citizen more conscious of his role in the process of development than ever before. The gulf between the bureaucracy and the people was bridged to a considerable extent which has been an administrative gain. And, a new comparatively young and modernizing leadership inclined in favour of change and envelopment has also emerged. Above all among the rural people a psychology or urge for development has emerged.17

Panchayati Raj system conceived for rural development through local participation representing local aspirations and local expectations. Aline and universal models of development have proved to be futile every where. The Indian situation demands regional solutions for regional problems. With its varied lop sidedness, functional disparities and distinct provincial circumstances, India needs an institutional organization which responds actively to all such requirements and helps to surmount them. Panchayati Raj institutions have been considered, despite their incremental growth, for successful implementation of rural development programmes.

Socio-Economic Change:

“Social change is the significant alteration of Social Structure; that is, of patterns of social action and interaction, including consequences and manifestations of such structures embodying norms, values, and cultural
products and symbols.” The concept of Social change is close to that of social and economic development and multidimensional progress in a society.\textsuperscript{18}

The notion of development does not involve a comparative judgment in terms of quality, but also what might be called a direction of growth. “The history of creativity in cultures and civilizations shows a double facet. On the one hand, it reveals the exhaustion of possibilities in a particular direction after which there is only repetition, rephrase refinement, but no further growth or development”.

Panchayati Raj movement is a consciously articulated device of accelerating the process of socio economic change; through Community Development Programme in the beginning. “Nothing has happened in any country in the world during the last few years so big in content and so revolutionary in designed”. Community Development could help social development by increasing the productive capacity of the people, by educating them as consumers of certain goods and services and by influencing the kinds of activities they may undertake. Similarly social development may release such foresees as might promote the capacity of the people to help themselves.

Among the various levels of Government, the Panchayati Raj system is a concrete embodiment with its proximity to people at large. The nature of involvement of the local government in the socio-economic change of the society deepens on the pattern of the polity. The policy decisions that are taken at the local level are normally in tune with the local needs and requirements.

Indian Administration needs to face umpteen number of challenges in all fronts. The problem of removal of poverty which has direct overtones with illiteracy, superstition, economic back wardens and other socio economic
factors. These issues need to be studied at micro level and solutions are to be suggested at different levels. The prevalence of distinct diversity in religious and communal thinking has to be dealt with threadbare analysis. The decentralized administration avoids the Union Government to find a common and general solution which many a time result in waste of human and material resources.

Our socio economic change has to be modeled on alternative approaches of development with labour intensive technology, on Nilokheri model which brought laurels from Jaawaharlal Nehru and other international development analysts. The philosophy of self reliance and self development along with the community, was the underlying factor of the above said model.

The socio economic change has to have a major thrust on agriculture and its relationship with the masses. Majority of the rural populace due to abysmal poverty an inherent debt system will not be able to make agriculture as profitable profession. Middlemen rob the centre profit in the process. These days agribusiness has attracted major national transnational companies through fertilizers, agricultural machinery which control the economy of agriculture in all the countries including India. These factors may be taken case of in local governments and think of proper ameliorative measures to over come this problem. May Latin American and Asian countries have made serious attempts towards this direction, turn caused favorable socio-economic transformation.¹⁹

Panchayati Raj is expected to bring about an effective social mobilization of the periphery. For Panchayati Raj works within a system of open political competition. It might also result in creating a set of permanent organizational work which continue in the peripheral villages.
Thus the advent of the Panchayati Raj system constitutes one of the most outstanding political, social and administrative developments in India in the post Independent period. The objectives and goals of social welfare state, concept of justice and developmental imperatives embedded in the Constitution of India, policy of development planning and launching of the community development programmes and National Extension Service Schemes for bringing about a silent and speedy socio economic revolution in the country side, have made Panchayati Raj institutions very important.

The world conference on Agrarian Reforms and Rural Development held in 1979 under the auspices of the FAO has recommended a programme of action which includes decentralization of institutes 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 frame work 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.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


