

COOCH BEHAR

with demarcation of
Blocks/Panchayat
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CHAPTER - 01

1. Introduction

The idea of participatory governance has gained enormous popularity in recent times in academic discourse and actual practice. Despite earlier views given by some who had considered participatory development as just another fashion, it has found its place in mainstream development thinking. There are also indications of its increasing adoption in development practices. Of late the debate has shifted towards empowerment and governance, implying participation not just at the local level but at a variety of levels as a flexible and at least partly demand-driven approach to governance. Participation of the stakeholders in the process of decision making, as against more passive forms of participation is the hallmark of participatory governance. Furthermore, participatory governance embodies those central elements of good governance which most directly serve the participatory agenda, namely accountability and rule of law.

The conventional definition of governance as the exercise of authority and control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development cannot explicitly acknowledge problems of information and agency. Thus, by implication, it is assumed that decision makers prefer or at least have sufficient information about existing resources, needs and ways and means for meeting those needs. Participatory governance aims to overcome this problem by introducing maximum transparency and sharing of information in a process that includes all stakeholders and leads to joint decision making whenever feasible. Therefore, participatory governance aspires for more complete and better information with the potential of more effective decision making and more efficient outcomes. Especially in the context of development at the local level, without participation by those outside the circle of the political and administrative actors, accountability remains illusive.

Participatory governance can be defined in various ways, highlighting its normative, descriptive or analytical aspects. The United Nations Committee of Experts on Public

Administration (CEPA) in its sixth session in April 2007, defined participatory governance as one of many public institutional strategies that contribute to shared vision in planning, budgeting, monitoring and accountability of development policies and programmes. Participatory governance, therefore, has both intrinsic and instrumental value. An effective development framework requires participation, transparency and accountability. The challenge for every public institution, whether at the national or local level, is to design governance and public administration system and processes that are inclusive, with the capacity to engage people in formulating implementing and accounting for development programmes.

Participation is valued for both intrinsic and instrumental reforms. The intrinsic value refers to the idea that the act of participation is valuable in itself, quite apart from any value it may have in helping to achieve other good things. Amartya Sen's forceful exposition of the idea of "development as freedom" clearly recognizes the intrinsic value of participation of the development process. In this perspective, development consists of the expression of a range of freedom to do and to be the things that human beings have reasons to value, and the freedom to participate meaningfully in public affairs is seen as one of those valuable freedoms. Sen makes a distinction between the opportunity aspects refers to the freedom to achieve valuable outcomes – such as ability to lead a life free from hunger, disease, illiteracy and so on, while the process aspects refers to the manner in which this outcomes are achieved – in particular, whether people have the freedom to influence the process that leads to the valuable outcomes. Development consists in the expansion of both this aspects of freedoms because people attach value not just to find outcomes but also to the process through which these outcomes are achieved.

The freedom to participate is related to the process aspects of freedom, and as such it is very much a constituent of development, not just a means of achieving it. As a constituent it may be valued just as much as the final outcomes. This value of freedom to participate in the process is distinct from and in addition to any value people may attach to the outcomes that may be achieved through participation. The value of participation is explicitly recognized in the Declaration of the Right to Development adopted by the United Nation in 1986, which says, 'the right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human

person and all people are *entitled to participate* in, contribute to and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development in which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realised.’

1.1 Statement of the Research Problem

After independence India embarked upon the path of planned development. During this initial period planning was from above and people at the local levels were in no way involved in the process. But following this course of development in the form of modernization it was found that the fruits of development and growth were not trickling down to the lower levels. In mid-fifties India adopted the welfare state model. Under this model the responsibility of the Indian state become enormous. But failure to reach targets becomes the major cause for concern among development planners. It was felt that centralized state with its bureaucratic apparatus was no longer capable of converting the traditional society to a modern one.

The emergence of development administration in mid-sixties gave rise to the concept of decentralization. The underlying assumption was not only decentralization of powers, functions and authority but also ensuring people’s involvement in the activities of the decentralized units as Panchayats. Democratic decentralization was considered better in terms of economy in time and cost penetration of development projects of the centre to the remote areas, development of sensitivity towards local problems, allowing people to develop skill and awareness and following greater people’s participation in local governance for development. People’s participation in local governance is fruit of democratic decentralization.

It may be noted that only decentralization ensures wide participation in local governance and only participatory local governance can bring about rapid development. For this, the Government of India set up a decentralized unit as Panchayat at rural level for rapid development and engagement for mass participation in development process. With this vision, Government of India amended the Constitution (73rd Amendment Act) in the year

1992. This act gave fresh air to Panchayati Raj Institutions as a unit of local self governance for development. This Amendment Act ensured that, it is the responsibility for every state to setup Gram Sabha with in a constituency of a Gram Panchayat to increase people's participation in development process and for the success of grass-root democracy. The Government of West Bengal introduced Gram Sabha at each constituency for popular participation. Gram Sansad incorporated by the West Bengal Panchayat Amendment Act 1994 in a Ward level in every Gram Panchayat for popular participation in decision making process. The West Bengal Panchayat Amendment Act, 2003 has made it obligatory for a Gram Panchayat to act upon any scheme or programme so far as its relates to the area of the Gram Sansad for mass participation at Gram Sansad level for the success of all-round development. Hence, participation is very important for the success of local governance for development in rural West Bengal. In this study an attempt has been made to find out various dimensions of people's participation in Gram Sansad as a grassroots unit of local governance. It mainly focuses on the nature of people's participation in local governance for development.

1.2 Objective of the Study

In India decentralized and participatory local governance can be explained well in the context of development programmes. The Panchayat Raj Institutions in West Bengal are considered as Public Institutions which are run by the people. The development outcomes catered by these institutions are generally thought to be the decision by the people. The institution of Gram Sansad at the Gram Panchayat level have been so designed as to facilitate people's participation in the process of development. Thus the present study attempts to explore the participatory local governance at the Gram Panchayat level for achieving the goals of development. Its specific objectives are:-

1. To explore the ideas of participatory local governance in the context of development programmes at the local level.
2. To examine the ideas of participatory governance at the local settings with reference to two Gram Panchayats in the district of Coochbehar.

3. To explain the nature of people's participation in Gram Sansad.

4. To identify the factor that contributes to and facilitate participation of people in development related decision making through the Institution of Gram Sansad.

5. To identify factors that hinder the participation of people in development related decision making through the Institution of Gram Sansad.

6. To study the policy implications of participatory development at the local level through the Institution of Gram Sansad.

1.3 Research Questions

The present study seeks to find answers to the following questions:-

i) What are theoretical implications of participatory local governance in development through Pananchayat Raj Institution?

ii) How can the relationship between theory and practice of participatory local governance through development programmes can be viewed at the local settings?

iii) What is the nature of people's participation in Gram Sansad?

iv) What are the factors contributing to people's participation in local governance through Pananchayat Raj Institution?

v) What are the factors that hinder people's participation in local governance through Pananchayat Raj Institution?

vi) What are the policy implications of people's participation in Gram Sansad?

1.4 Methodology

The main focus of this research work is the identification of causes behind the non participation in the platform of the participatory development like as Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad. This study also focuses on the remedies from these types of deficiencies of the

participatory development and local governance. For this reason the main focus of the research work is on the “Participatory Local Governance and Development: a study of the Gram Sansad experiment in two selected Gram Panchayats of Coochbehar district of West Bengal”. For this purpose data has been collected from primary and secondary sources. Field investigation included two Gram Panchayats from Coochbehar district for real investigation. Random sampling was adopted for the selection of the respondents from the all Gram Sansads of Rampur-I and Khagrabari Gram Panchayat of Coochbehar district. In order to conduct the intensive study of the working of the Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha for the purpose of the participatory development it was decided to administer questionnaires to all the office bearers and Panchayat members of the respective Gram Panchayats.

Extensive field investigations were done intermittently during the last one decade. Information regarding the structure and functions of the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad and regarding the information about the people’s participation in the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad, the causes behind the non participation in the Gram Sansad and other related information were gathered from official records, files of the office, minute books of the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad meetings, notices of the Gram Panchayats related to the Gram Sansad meetings and the handbooks of the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansads.

After the formulation of the questionnaires, a pilot study was undertaken to test the questionnaires. During the pilot study, some respondents belonging to the two Gram Panchayats of the Coochbehar district were administered questions. The questions were revised and modified accordingly and a final questionnaire was prepared. Besides administering the questionnaire extensive informal interviews were conducted with more peoples of the respective Gram Panchayats area and the members of the Gram Panchayats of the respective Gram Panchayats area and other panchayats functionaries of the respective Gram Panchayats. Some state level and district level Panchayat functionaries were interviewed informally during the investigation period. The respondents and officials interviewed were cooperative and eager to discuss their experience about the Gram Sansad. This formed a forum of participatory development process.

Besides the interviews, data and information about the participatory development process in rural area were collected from the official records and notifications. The State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development, Kalyani, Department of Panchayat & Rural Development, Kolkata, Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, District Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Coochbehar, were frequently visited by the researcher. All of the information was not found properly from the offices due to the poor maintenance of the office files and documents.

A number of libraries were visited for the purpose of collecting secondary data. The National Library, Kolkata, the library of the State Institute of Panchayat and Rural Development, Kalyani, Library of Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi, the Central Library of North Bengal University, North Bengal State library, Coochbehar, were consulted by the researcher besides the A.B.N.Seal College library, Coochbehar. The data was analyzed by tabulating it to note the frequency.

1.5 Review of Literature

The review of literature is an essential ingredient of research work. It enables us to know about the work already done and provides insights for future research work. Keeping in view the above, attempts have been made for a brief review of available literature, which helps to understand concepts, issues, problems, developing insights and also the nature of participation in such studies. The descriptive details are given below:-

Iqbal Narain, Sushil Kumar, P.C. Mathur (1970) and associates in their book, *Panchayati Raj Administration Old Controls and New Challenges* have attempted to make a comparative study of the pattern and supervision of control over the Panchayati Raj Institution of Madras, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.

In the book, *Patterns of Panchayati Raj in India* edited by **G. Ram Reddy, Mohit Bhattacharjee (1977)** has discussed in briefly the structure, powers and functions of the West Bengal Panchayati Raj Institution before the 1973 Act.

Dr. Ashok Mukhopadhyay (1977) in his book *Panchayat Administration in West Bengal* has discussed in detail the theoretical and applied aspects of West Bengal Panchayats. He pointed out that West Bengal Panchayat administration has suffered to some extent from some structural inadequacies. He also pointed out that the Welfare activities of the rural people do not go ahead due to the lack of financial resources of the Panchayats.

M. Shiviah, K.B. Srivastava, A.C. Jena (1978) in their book, *Panchayati Raj Elections in West Bengal: A Case Study in Institution Building for Rural Development* have discussed the nomination process, election campaign, voting behavior, sense of political efficiency, and the issue of party-based contest. They also pointed out that election has increased the political consciousness of rural people. They indicate in their book that Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal has been seriously affected by the lack of finance.

S. R. Nigam (1978) in his book *Local Government* has discussed the systematic account and full description of the local government institutions of five major countries namely England, France, the U.S.A, the former U.S.S.R and India. He described the historical background of local government of India since the ancient period. He also discusses the structure, finance, power, function of Panchayati Raj system in India in his book since the very beginning of Panchayati Raj Institution in India. He discusses the formation and the procedure of the meeting of the Gram Sabha. In conclusion he said mass illiteracy, unfavorable economic condition, backwardness of women and the existence of narrow party politics are the great threats to the Panchayats in India. At the same time he was hopeful that the Panchayats in India have overcome these problems within a short period to stand on their own legs and grow to maturity.

Marcus Franda (1979) in his book *Small is Politics organizational alternatives in India's Rural Development* has discussed the causes of the failure of Community Development programme and the emergence of Panchayati Raj Institution in India from the very beginning to 1978's Panchayat's election of west Bengal. He gave special emphasis on the Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal under the Left Front govt. after 1978's election. He carefully observed the procedure of Panchayat election of West Bengal and

peoples' participation in election. He pointed out in his book that Panchayati Raj Institution in West Bengal made a success story by 'Operation Barga' and 'Land Reform'.

In their book, *The Struggle for Empire*, **R.C. Mazumder and A.D. Pusalkar (1979)** have discussed the nature, structure, functions, eligibility and disqualification of the members of the village assembly.

Dr. Asit Kr. Basu (1983) in his Bengali book, *The West Bengal Panchayat System* discussed the nature, pattern, structures and powers of Panchayati Raj Institution in West Bengal up to 1979. He has pointed out that the political consciousness of the rural people has been increased by the party based election under new Panchayati Raj system. In his book he indicates some reasons for the failure of Panchayati Raj system. He suggested that intensive training is required for all the persons who are engaged in Panchayat works.

Nirmal Mukherjee & D. Bandhyapadhyaya in their report (1992) *New Horizons for West Bengal's Panchayats* not only focused on Panchayat, but the book ranges more widely to cover such other matters as, according to our perception, have a bearing on the working of the Panchayats. In the second chapter, an overview of the Panchayat in West Bengal, they indicate the background of this institution. In this chapter they showed that West Bengal is the only state which has ongoing political Panchayats. They also showed that Panchayats of West Bengal achieved her goal especially in land reform and rural development. They indicate in their report that all the persons they met, irrespective of their political affiliation, agreed that in spite of some deficiencies and weaknesses of Panchayat constituted a positive step forward. So, in their view, Panchayats in West Bengal are regarded as a success story. The third chapter showed the concept of self-govt.; the fourth chapter deals with programmes which the Panchayats could consider. They indicate in their report that under the control of Union, Panchayat cannot have full autonomy. They also indicate that self-government is meaningless without control over implementing staff. They indicated that without financial self-reliance Panchayat could not have full autonomy. They suggested that a good land administration, good agricultural development, setting up of commercial farming and organized self-help group, Panchayat head quarter at the center of the village, strong financial

resource and research works in the field of Panchayat, can easily help to overcome the present deficiencies, weaknesses and make a success story of Panchayati Raj Institution.

Neil Webster (1992) in his book, *Panchayati Raj and the Decentralization of Development Planning in West Bengal* has described the historical background, nature, structure, power and functions of the new Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal. In his book he described the people's participation in Gram Sabha. In his case study 'Panchayati Raj in Practice' - two selected Gram Panchayats (Kanpur II & Saldya) of Burdwan district he shows the relationship between Panchayat and the common people, Panchayat and the administration, and Panchayat as a wing of rural development. In his study he showed three areas for the implementation of Panchayati Raj in West Bengal: "(I) the changes which brought about the politicization of development within the Panchayat and, thereby, facilitated a transformation of rural development in the state, (ii) the findings of the case study on development in participation of the poor in the two selected Gram Panchayats including participation in development planning and the lessons to be learnt from these leading into, (iii) a critical assessment of the success of the programmes and the implications for rural development through Panchayati Raj in the future for West Bengal". In his study he also showed that the Panchayat framework of West Bengal implemented by the Left Front Government is not radically different from the other states of India structurally. He showed that the West Bengal Panchayats are directly controlled by the party order. In his view, party organizational structure closely parallels the administrative framework of the Panchayat. He tries to show that the corruption in Panchayat has totally decreased in the tenure of the Left Front Government and improvement of socio-economic life of the rural people in West Bengal has also been noticed. Financial assistance for Gram Panchayats has been enhanced and the participation of the masses, except of the women, has also increased in Gram Panchayat activities. In conclusion he pointed out that the decentralization and the transfer of power to the rural poor is not enough to remove the problems of socio-economic structure of rural Bengal.

S.S. Meenakshisundaram, (1994), in his book *Decentralization in Developing Countries* has makes a comparative study of the decentralization patterns in three developing countries of comparable size and population – Nigeria, China and India. He discusses the

brief history of local government in each of these countries. He pointed out that greater decentralization and democratization is needed not only for development but also to fulfill the needs and aspirations of the people. He also pointed out that the journey to decentralization is neither short nor easy, but it appears inevitable in any human society.

A.C. Jena (1995) in his book *Panchayati Raj Finance in West Bengal – A Status Study* has discussed the state Finance Commission's report of West Bengal 1995- a Review. This analysis indicates that there is a scope to enhance the resources of Panchayati Raj Institution on the one hand and flow of United Fund and other grants to discharge their responsibilities on other hand.

Shakuntala Sharma (1997) in her book *Grassroot Politics and Panchayati Raj* has provides a comprehensive analysis of grassroot politics and Panchayati Raj in India. She traces the genesis and growth of the village government from ancient times till today in terms of Panchayat and Panchayat leadership as also Panchayat elections and voting behavior. She analyses how the profile of rural leadership and rural power structure throw new light on the working of Panchayat system. She investigates and analyses various aspects of grassroot democracy and politics in terms of performance of Panchayat, patterns of rural power structure, and links of rural leaders with higher political leadership.

M.R. Biju (1998) in his book, *Dynamic of New Panchayati Raj System: Reflections and Retrospections* has discussed the historical background of Panchayati Raj system of India since the ancient Vedic Period. He discussed the present structure, functions, powers, personnel, problems, financial management and people's participation in the Panchayati Raj system in India, but he specially focused on the Panchayati Raj system of Kerala. The author has paid special attention to the role of Panchayati Raj Institution of Kerala in connection with pollution problem and the problem of weaker sections. He showed that the Panchayati Raj Institution of Kerala faces some problems in her activities such as financial inadequacy, panchayat & bureaucratic relationship, low participation of the people in Gram Sabha & Village Assemblies, etc. In conclusion he suggested some remedies for this purpose like increasing financial resource of Panchayati Raj Institution, increasing co-operation between Panchayat members and bureaucrats, and proper training for the Panchayat members. In the

case of much people participation he suggested that convenient day, time, place etc. should be taken into account by the panchayat authorities. Conscious and constant efforts of higher-level authority of Panchayati Raj and state government are essential in order to make them realize that their active participation is really meaningful in rural development.

In **S. N. Jha and P.C. Mathur's (ed.) (1999)** book *Decentralization and Local Politics*, **S.N.Jha** has discussed the structure, finance, functions, politics in local govt. and Constitutionalism of Panchayati Raj Institution and comparative studies between various states of local govt. **P.C.Mathur** presents an overview of Panchayati Raj Institution with special emphasis on the changing political preference and the 'Institutional Pendulum' of democratic decentralization. **C.V. Raghavulu** and **E.A.Narayan** identified some problems, which are affecting the Panchayati Raj as evident in the comparative study of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and West Bengal. **M.A.Oommen** discusses the perennial problem of resources for Panchayati Raj Institution. **S.K. Sings** examines the extending of provisions of the amendment (1996) to the scheduled areas. **Susheela Kaushik** analyzed the role of women in Panchayats. **Amal Roy and Jayalakshmi** pointed out the structure of leadership in Panchayati Raj Institution of Karnataka has changed. They discovered the emergence of a new class in leadership (land-owning castes) in Karnataka. **G.K. Lieten** found that the leadership pattern in rural West Bengal totally changed and a new type of leadership came into power in Panchayati Raj Institution in West Bengal.

G. Palanithurai (1999) in his book *New Panchayati Raj System at Work an Evaluation* has discussed the details of the mindset of the elected local body leaders and the bureaucrats who are working in the local body institutions. He also highlighted the interface between the leaders and the officials. He mentioned that the practical difficulties faced by the local body leaders in discharging their role, function and responsibilities. He specially emphasized the Tamil Nadu Panchayati Raj Institution. He finally indicates the lapses, drawbacks and difficulties in operationalising the principles of the Constitutional amendment.

Buddhadeb Ghosh in chapter 'West Bengal' in the book, *Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories of India 2000* has pointed out the structure, functions, finance, election and historical background of West Bengal's Panchayati Raj

Institution since the very beginning of the British period to West Bengal Panchayat Act 1998. He has pointed out that West Bengal's Panchayati Raj is a success story. But in conclusion he showed some drawbacks of West Bengal Panchayats. Inadequate resources and burden of assigned functionaries of West Bengal's Panchayat come in the way of successful functioning of Panchayats. He suggests West Bengal's Panchayat needs more reforms.

Prabhat Dutta (2003) in his book, *Panchayats, Rural Development and Local Autonomy: The West Bengal experience* has discussed in brief the historical background of local government of India, especially panchayat of West Bengal. This book analyses the structure and function of Panchayati Raj Institution. This study indicates the people's participation in Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad in West Bengal and also people's participation in various rural development programmes. This study also indicates the political consciousness of rural people of West Bengal. He has pointed out that Panchayat in West Bengal enjoys functional autonomy in its day-to-day working. He indicates that government control over the Panchayat is rarely exercised. He also indicates that the bureaucracy cannot be a threat to grassroots democracy in West Bengal. Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad meeting are now held regularly, but the people's participation is very low. He indicates three reasons for the low attendance: (i) lack of time, (ii) the feeling that decisions are not taken in the meeting and (iii) the reluctance of the Panchayat members to listen to the people in the meeting patiently, sympathetically and carefully. He also showed the participation in Gram Sabha of Madhya Pradesh and Palli Sabha of Orissa is very low for the same reasons.

Prabhat Dutta (2003) in his book, *Towards Good Governance and Sustainable Development* has highlighted the election procedure, structure and processes of participation in rural governance in India, relation between panchayats and bureaucrats, and the structure, function and planning of decentralized governance in Madhya Pradesh and has pointed out the structure, function, planning procedure, financial resource of Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal. This book also highlighted the participation of the stakeholders in the process of implementation of the rural development programmes in West Bengal.

D. Bandyopadhyay, Amitava Mukherjee, (2004), in their book *New Issues in Panchayati Raj* have assesses the current situation of Panchayats, particularly relating to

participation of women in the process of local governance, the story of implementation and deviations of 73rd Constitutional Amendment. They also analyse the role of new community based institutions such as self-help groups in rural development, they analyse the tactics adopted by the legislators, bureaucracy and the rich to appropriate power to themselves, against the letter and spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, ways and means to integrate community based organizations with the Panchayati Raj system.

Rural Development in West Bengal edited by **Amal Mandal (2005)** is a valuable book, and presents a number of papers by eminent scholars in the field of rural development through Panchayats. **Amal Mandal** in his paper has pointed out various development plans in rural development in India, mainly in West Bengal. He pointed out that Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad of West Bengal have not brought about a sea change in mass participation and the people are not really enthused nor do they control the Gram Panchayat members and their decisions. He also pointed out that the participation in Gram Sabha and Sansad meetings are very low. He showed that participation of the women, opposition party supporters and youngsters is too much low. He also showed that members of Gram Panchayats control the meetings and these meeting are well-rehearsed ones of the ruling parties. **Chanchan Mandal** in his paper has pointed out that due to the lack of own resources and tax collection power, Panchayats have become one of the implementing arms of the state government, instead of blossoming as an autonomous body or as an institution of self-government **Swapan Rakshit** showed that the social forestry would be a significant source of revenue of Panchatyat.

Dr. Durga Das Basu (Reprint 2006) in his book *Introduction to the Constitution of India (part-v)* has discussed the history of local government and the 73rd and 74th Amendment Acts in details. He has discussed the structure, reservation policy and duration of Panchayats, qualification-disqualification, power, authority and responsibility of Panchayat and the finance of the new Panchayati raj system. (243—243 (ix) of the Constitution).

S.S. Awasthy (2006) in his book *Indian Government and Politics (chapter-xiv)* has discussed the history of Panchayati Raj in India since ancient times. He highlighted some defects in Panchayati Raj during the period ranging from **Balvant Rai Mehata Committee** to **Ashok Mehata Committee**. He indicates that Indira Gandhi's centralizing tendency was

one of the most difficult defects of Panchayati Raj Institution in India. He also discussed the structure, finance, function and autonomy of Panchayati Raj Institution under 73rd amendment act. He highlighted that the Panchayati Raj Institution did not run smoothly till today. He indicates some reasons behind this situation: people's unawareness about Panchayat, political unwillingness of some state governments, inadequate training programmes for the members of Gram Panchayat, inadequate women participation, salary of panchayat members and corruption.

V.M. Rao, J.S. Hanamashetti, K. Rup Kumar, (2007), in their book *Efficiency and Governance* has discussed that the rural credit policy is aimed at ensuring provision of sufficiently and timely credit at reasonable rates of interest to as large a segment of the rural population as possible. They also discussed the Cooperative structure has a unique position in rural credit delivery system as it plays a crucial role in dispensation of credit from agriculture and rural development. They also evaluate the efficiency of the governance in short term credit structure in Maharashtra.

Bidyut Chakraborty, Mohit Bhattacharya, (2008) in their edited book *The Governance Discourse – A Reader* have given its uncritical endorsement of neo-liberal political thrust, governance is more than a mere theoretical shift in the domain of Public Administration. It is clear from various article of eminent scholars that conforming to an ideological agenda of the donors, the practitioners of governance seem to have reinvented the development discourse in an ethnocentric way. It is clear from valuable articles that neo-Taylorism seeks to provide a universal solution to problems irrespective of the socio-economic context.

Biswanath Chakraborty (2008) in his book *People's Participation in West Bengal Panchayat System* has made a conceptual analysis of local self government and people's participation in Panchayati Raj Institution. He analyses the various dimensions of people participation in Panchayati Raj Institution in West Bengal, and highlights various successes of Panchayati Raj Institution on rural development in West Bengal. He also pointed out the problems of Panchayati Raj Institution in West Bengal. He mentioned three models of local government in his book – a) colonial-liberal model, b) communist-Soviet model, c)

Gandhian-Sarvodaya model. He mentioned that India adopted liberal classical model of local government and State of West Bengal followed the Communist Soviet model of local government. He also pointed out in his book that Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal was run by the direct control of CPI (M). In conclusion he said that Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal was run by centralized line in the name of decentralization.

Kuldeep Mathur (2008) in his book *From Government to Governance – A Brief Survey of the Indian Experience* has discussed the theoretical and conceptual framework of governance and decentralization. He also analyzed the Indian perspective of governance.

U.B. Singh (2009) in his book *Decentralized Democratic Governance in New Millennium* makes a comparative study of decentralized democratic governance in the USA, Britain, France, Japan, Russia and India. He explains the meaning, essential elements, rationale and importance of local governments. It addresses issues concerning rural-urban reforms, finance and local revenues, people's participation and central local government relations.

Laxmi Sharma (2009) in her book *Accounting & Arrangements in Panchayati Raj Institution in India* has briefly discussed the finance and accounting of Panchayati Raj Institution in India. She discusses how social audit of the Gram Sabhas ensured better accountability of elected representatives. She discusses the overview of the Panchayati Raj system of Uttaranchal.

V. Ramchandran (2009) in his book *Local Governments and Poverty Alleviation* has discussed the direct and effective participation of local governance bodies with the masses in implementation of plans which can achieve the targets of poverty alleviation. He mentioned that these bodies can create good local infrastructure, good environment and create jobs for the rural and urban poor. He also mentioned that these can also be helpful for providing healthcare, education and shelter to the rural and urban poor.

B.N.Mathur, (2009), in his book *Decentralized Democracy and Panchayati Raj* has discussed many crucial issues pertaining to the Panchayati Raj Institution in general and women in Panchayati Raj Institution in particular. He pointed out in his book that the Panchayats have flexibility in the utilization of funds, monitoring and supervision of works. He discusses the performance of Panchayati Raj Institution of Haryana.

Sudesh Nangia, Mrityunjay Mohan Jha, Suresh Misra, H. Ramchandran & M. Velayutham (2010) in their edited book *Development Concern in the 21st Century* has highlighted the various issues relating to participatory governance in various articles of eminent scholars. Their essays focuses on livelihood issues and employment generation, promoting gender equality, ensuring clean environment, and promoting participatory approach to development. They deal with various themes and analyze them in the context of the emerging scenario and give a new dimension to the development debate.

P. Adnarayana Reddy, D. Uma Devi & N. Harinath (2010) in their book *Rural Infrastructure and Development* have discussed that two-third of our rural population is living in rural areas with no access to the modern facilities and basic infrastructure. They mentioned that the government's intervention is very limited due to the unawareness of realities of the people concerned. They presented the survey report of the Chittoor district about the socio-economic profile, community needs and the interventions of science and technology.

Dasarathi Bhuyan, Purna Chandra Pradhan, (2010), in their book *New Panchayati Raj- A Study of Socio-Political and Administrative Dynamics* has made a perfect analysis of the Panchayati Raj Institution. They have studied in detail the Panchayati Raj Act of Orissa and analyzed the various dimensions of Panchayati Raj in Orissa, and also assess the functioning of elected bodies. They examine the scope of higher level political interference in the functioning of all the three tiers of the system, examine the problem of resources of Panchayati Raj Institution and assess the weaker sections' awareness about Panchayati Raj Institution and their participation as functionaries and as beneficiaries. They also studied the relationship between officials and non-officials and discusses in terms of cooperation and hostility.

Buddhadeb Ghosh, Bidyut Mohanty, Nitya Jacob, (2011), in their edited book *Local Governance Search for New Path* have discussed how the local governments in India, with the support and cooperation of civil society organizations, are accountable for delivering clean, sustainable and cost effective basic services to the common villagers. The main focus of the study is on civil society organizations and their role on local government institution.

Prof. M. Shiviah, K.V. Narayana Rao, L.S.N Murty, G.Mallikarjuniah in their book, *Panchayati Raj- An Analytical Survey* have described in detail the nature, structure, powers and function of the Panchayati Raj Institution in India since the period of *Rig Veda* to the enactment of the report of Balvant Rai Mehta in independent India. They pointed out that Panchayati Raj Institution is an important contribution for bridging the gap between the modern political superstructure and a traditional social base.

In **Sudhir Krishna's (1993)** paper “**Agenda of Electoral Issues for the New Panchayati Raj Set Up**” an attempt has been made to identify and analyze such areas related to the Panchayati Raj Institution. He indicates some provisions relating to electoral matters and a clear mandate is already provided in the Constitution. In conclusion he proposed to take some awareness programmes for official and non-official and commonplace people for the success of Panchayati Raj Institution. He hoped that right aim would make the Panchayats an issue of the common people, an issue of pride, positive expectations and participation. (Quarterly Journal of the All India Institute of Local Self-Government Vol. LX iv no.-4, Oct-Dec' 1993).

K.P. Kannan (1993) in his report “**Local Self-Government and Decentralized Development**” has focused on the framework for local bodies as laid down in the 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Constitution and the lines of follow-up action required to be initiated at the level of the states for the local bodies to come into existence within the stipulated one year and start functioning as effective units of self-government as well as local level development and planning. He also discussed financial resource, structure and election, reservation procedure, bureaucratic control, and procedure of people participation at the panchayat level (Economic and Political Weekly, December 4, 1993 Vol. XX viii No. 49).

Nirmal Mukarji (1993) in his article **“The Third Stratum”** has discussed the federal structure of India. He critically discussed the 73rd and 74th Amendment Act. He viewed that within an individual state Panchayat cannot enjoy full autonomy. According to him, land reform is an essential pre-requisite for empowering Panchayat. He pointed out that West Bengal is the first state to running political Panchayat. He also pointed out that Panchayats of West Bengal have, by now, been treated as essential components of the state. He showed that the Left Front government of West Bengal, after 1977, embarked upon a two-legged programme of rural resurgence: Panchayat and Land Reform. He has shown tha West Bengal is the only state where middle and lower class people come to power. So in his view in spite of some deficiencies and weaknesses, the state Panchayat is regarded as a success story by almost everyone, regardless of political affiliation (Economic and Political Weekly, May 1st 1993 Vol.-XX viii No.-8).

James Manor (1993) in his paper **“Panchayati Raj and Early Warning of Disasters”** has pointed out that the Panchayati Raj Institution is not only a virtually full-proof source of early warning about potential calamities, but also an effective means of ensuring that such warnings do not go unheeded. He has shown that this institution will only be effective at raising the alarm about calamities if elected members are given enough power. He also pointed out that if state level politicians do not extend significant power to these bodies under the laws now being revised in Karnataka, Panchayat members would become demoralized and passive (Economic and Political Weekly, May 22, 1993 Vol-XX viii No.21).

Dr. G.V. Joshi & Miss Jyothi Shenoy (1995) in their article **“The Gram Sabha in Karnataka: Some Reflections and Realities”** have pointed out the background of Gram Sabha in Karnataka from the beginning to new Panchayat Act 1993. The central purpose of this article is to bring out as to whether the Gram Sabha has been an active body in Karnataka so far and to what extent it can emerge as primarily democratic in action in future. They showed that the Karnataka Panchayat Act 1985 & 1993 failed to build up a strong Gram Sabha. (Quarterly Journal of the All India Institute of Local Self-Government, Vol-LX vi No.-3-4 July-Dec.’1995).

A.K. Venkat Subramaniam (1999) in his article **“Good Governance Begins Here”** published in the **‘Hindu’**, dated 14 Dec, 1999 has pointed out that most of the Indian states are not enthusiastic about holding the local body election as they were not keen on creating another set of democratically elected bodies to share power before 73rd and 74th Amendment Act. Tamil Nadu government decided to hold the election of the Village Panchayats body on non-party basis (The Hindu 14th December, 1999).

Debashis Konar (1999) in his report **“Rural Bodies Politically Biased: Report”** published in The Statesman, dated 2nd July, 1999, has presented the survey report conducted by the State Institute of Panchayats and Rural Development on the Panchayat of Nadia, which shows the worst performance of the District. Another study team surveyed 17 Districts of West Bengal and showed Howrah at the top position and Nadia at lowest position with respect to the socio-economic conditions. Cooch Behar was ranked at 13. This report also indicates that the Panchayati Raj system works totally in a biased manner, depending on political affiliations, and beneficiaries who are mainly selected upon political identity (The Statesman 2nd July 1999).

Maitreesh Ghatak and Maitreya Ghatak (2002) in their article **“Recent Reforms in the Panchayat System in West Bengal-Toward Greater Participatory Governance?”** have showed the structure, function and participation of people in the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad meeting. They showed that the peoples’ participation in Sansad meeting and Sabha meeting is very low, particularly in the case of SC, ST and women participants. All of them are less interested to attend the Sansad meetings. They also showed that those who are present in the meeting have criticizing about the performance of Panchayat. They studied selected twenty village councils of three districts (North and South 24 Paraganas, South Dinajpur) of West Bengal. They undertook a comparative study of the function, people participation, development works, finance, village planning of Panchayat, mainly Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha’s activities of West Bengal and Kerala. They suggest some measures for the success of Gram Panchayat. For the successful implementation of the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad they have identified some sectors such as education, health, women development, agriculture, irrigation, animal husbandry, fishery, cottage and Small Scale industries and infrastructure. (Economic and Political Weekly, January 5, 2002).

Satya Prakash Dash (2002) in his article **“Decentralized Planning and Gram Panchayats-Problems and Prospects: A Case Study of Dadhibamanpur Gram Panchayat”** has investigated and analyzed the role and functions of Panchayat Institutions in implementing developmental programmes through decentralized planning. He argues that political stability, public service performance, equity and macro- economic stability are some of the factors that influence functioning of these institutions. He concludes that people’s participation and coordination, and the coordination between Panchayati Raj Institutions and government agencies, and adequate planning at the local level can help on the realization of the cherished dream – of administrative decentralization and empowerment at the grassroots level (The Indian Journal of Public Administration Oct-Dec’ 2002, Vol. XL viii No.-4).

Mukul Kumar (2005) in his article **“Perils of Participatory Democracy”** has pointed out the power and function, resource, relationship between Panchayati Raj Institution and bureaucracy at rural level and at the block level of north India and his opinion is based on his experience of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. He showed that the Gram Sabha meetings of this region are totally meaningless. The attendance of villagers in the Gram Sabha meetings is too much low. Gram Sabha meeting are occasionally held and signatures of members are taken by visiting their houses. People’s apathy is, to a great extent, due to the lack of powers and resources available at the disposal of panchayat. He showed that majority of the Panchayat Pradhans are, however, subordinated to the operating system of bureaucratic supremacy at least up to block level. The relation between Gram Panchayats and lower level bureaucracy is likely to be corrupted. In conclusion he suggests some measures: (i) Political supremacy should be the cardinal principle for operation at the Gram Panchayat level, (ii) Resources need to be made available at the Panchayat level. (iii) The secretariats of Gram Panchayats need to be made fully functional not just on paper. In his view bureaucracy is a good substitute for the Gram Panchayat (Economic and Political Weekly, November12, 2005).

Pratyusna Patnaik (2005) in his special article **“Affirmative Action and Representation of Weaker Sections - Participations and Accountability in Orissa’s Panchayats”** describes the pattern of decentralization of government of developing countries and theoretical perspective of representation and accountability. This study showed that the

attendance of Gram Panchayat members is irregular and monthly meeting is very marginal, particularly for the case of SC/ST and women representative. He showed some causes behind this situation: (i) social restriction, economic compulsion and household work, (ii) distance of the Gram Panchayat office from the village. He also showed that Gram Sabha meetings of Orissa are held irregularly and if this meeting is held the local elites and very few villagers who always support the elites are present in the meetings. So in his view the local governance of Orissa is dominated mostly by the elites. In conclusion he suggests, the affirmative action in decentralization has not been successful in ensuring proper and effective representation of the weaker sections of the society. He also suggests participation of elected representative and their responsiveness towards citizens' interests and accountability in the local government bearing the empowerment of weaker sections of society. (Economic and Political Weekly, October 29, 2005).

Bidyut Chakraborty (2006) in his article, “**Left Front’s 2006 Victory in West Bengal: Continuity or a Trend Setter?**” in Economic and Political weekly has pointed out that the Left Front gradually expanded its organization network within the state with the help of Panchayati Raj Institution. He also pointed out the Panchayat of West Bengal is centralized in the name of decentralization. He showed in his article that the Panchayat of West Bengal was governed by the party’s high commands (Economic and Political Weekly, August 12-18 August 2006, VOI XII No.32).

Dayabati Roy and Parthasarathi Benerjee (2006) in their article “**Left Front’s Electoral Victory in West Bengal- An Ethnographer’s Account**” have pointed out, the Panchayats of rural Bengal are performing their activities under direct control of political parties. He showed that at the time of Zamindary system, the upper caste dominated the rural society but now SC/ST have come to power in rural areas under Left Front govt. (Economic and Political Weekly, 7th to 13th October 2006, Vol xII No.-40).

D. Bandyopadhyay (2006) in his article “**Is The Institution of District Magistrate Still Necessary?**” has pointed out that the elected representatives of local rural governance are much more answerable to the people than bureaucrats. He suggests in his article a new

system of representative, responsive and responsible district governance (Economic and Political Weekly, November 25 to 1st December, 2006. Vol xli No.47).

Yamini Aiyar (2006) in his article **“Decentralization and Democracy”** pointed out the Panchayat leaders are unaware of their roles and responsibilities; and perform selected functions such as beneficiary selection, minor repair, construction works, and site selection. He also pointed out that the Panchayat’s resources are limited. In a comparative study between four states of India namely Maharashtra, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka, **Aiyar** pointed out the failure of Gram Sabha. He showed in his article that the panchayat members are mere agents of the state Government rather than of institution of self-government. He also showed that **‘Education guarantee scheme’** of Madhya Pradesh and **‘Shishu Shiksha Kendra Scheme’** and **‘Sahayikas’** of West Bengal reached roaring success under Panchayati Raj system. (Economic and Political Weekly, November 25, 2006).

Samir Garg (2006) of Chhattisgarh, in his article **“Grass-Root Mobilization for Children’s Nutrition Rights,”** pointed out the Panchayati Raj Institutions, mainly the **‘Sarpanch’** and the **‘Janapad Panchayat’** appoints and removes the ICDS workers. He showed that the Panchayati Raj Institution of Chhattisgarh played this important role but the village level Gram Sabha does not enjoy any power in monitoring, penalizing irregularities in appointments, and removal of ICDS workers. So in his view it is a weakness of Gram Sabha of Chhattisgarh’s local self-government (Economic and Political Weekly, August 26 to 1st September 2006, Vol xli No.-34).

Sanjay Savale (2006) in his paper **“Is Local Really Better? Comparing EGS and Locally Managed Rural Works Programmes in Nasik district”** of Maharashtra showed that total responsibility for implementing SGRY is under Panchayati Raj Institution and in the case of EGS projects this institution has only the discretion to choose who gets employed on such projects. It is formal provisions for Village General Assembly (Gram Sabha) to supervise and control the ways in which village councils (Gram Panchayat) plan and execute the SGRY projects. He showed in his paper that the General Assemblies of Nasik district are occasional events. If it held, a small number of people closely associated in the

village council. He showed that Village Assemblies are failed to monitoring SGRY projects. (Economic and Political Weekly, December 16 to 22, 2006 Vol xII No.-50).

Sudhir Sharma (2006) in his paper “**Democratic Decentralization**” has pointed out the structure, function, and finance and planning of Panchayati Raj Institution in the state of Tripura. He showed that the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad are providing an active forum to discuss, plan and evaluate the social benefits of the scheme. He also showed the Sabha and Sansad of Tripura are true agencies for economic and social change as a decentralized local body. In his view democratic decentralization is fully successful in the state of Tripura (Yojana, December 2006, Vol-50).

Indranil De (2006) in his article “**Role of Decentralization**” indicates the importance of decentralization for rapid rural development. He studied the **Swajaldhara** Project and **Sanitation** campaign of Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and the state of West Bengal. He showed the Sanitation programmes of Karnataka under Panchayati Raj system and **Swajaldhara** project of Uttar Pradesh have achieved success. But these projects are failures in the state of West Bengal as evident from his field study based on Birbhum district. He also showed that the people of Birbhum district do not want to contribute money due to the lack of faith about the efficient functioning of Panchayats. He opines that community participation seems to be the key to success in decentralization effort. (Yojana, June 2006, Vol-50).

Yatindra Singh Sisodia (2006) in his paper “**People’s Participation in Gram Sabha- A Case Study of Rural Madhya Pradesh**” describes the historical background of Panchayati Raj system since the days of British India. He showed that the Panchayati Raj Institution is a genuine structure of grassroot democracy. He showed that after the introduction of ‘**Gram Swaraj**’ on 26th January, 2001, the state government of Madhya Pradesh has transferred all the power from the previous Panchayats to Gram Sabha. But Sisodia showed that peoples’ participation in Gram Sabha is very low and common people are not aware about the power and function of Gram Sabha. Sarpanch and other elite people dominate the decision-making process of Gram Sabha. He suggests various awareness programmes shall be able to increase the importance of Gram Sabha to the common people. (Kurukshetra, May 2006, Vol-54).

Hena Naqvi (2006) in her article “**Social Auditing: A Tool of Participatory Evaluation in Panchayati Raj System**” describes social auditing to be a very important tool for the assessment of non-financial aspects. She showed that social auditing and Panchayati Raj systems are inextricably linked with each other as both emphasise people’s participation, the former being in the monitoring and evaluation while latter in local self-governance. He also showed the social auditing to be an additional duty of the Gram Sabha, but this additional duty monitors corruption of the Panchayat and acts as a mouthpiece of the marginalized people. (Kuruksheeta, June 2006, Vol-54).

Amrit Patel (2006) in his article “**Role of PRIS in Implementing Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme**” has pointed out the low participation in the Panachayat Raj Institution. He had showed people’s participation in Gram Sabha meeting is too much low. Nearabout 7% people are participating in the Gram Sabha meetings. He also showed that women & SC/ST people’s participation is very poor. He found some causes behind this low participation. As a cause he indicate that people are not aware of the aims and objectives of Gram Sabha Meetings. In his view NREG scheme increases the importance of Gram Sabha and Gram Panchayat to rural people. (Kuruksheeta, August 2006 ,Vol-54).

Dr. Mahipal (2006) in his paper “**Pnachayati Raj and Bharat Nirman: Role in Effective Implementation**” highlighted the role of three-tier Panchayats for the implementation of ‘**Bharat Nirman**’ programme. He pointed out in his paper about the number of Panchayat members and their role. He also discussed the role of Gram Sabha for the monitoring and evaluation of **Bharat Nirman** Programme. (Kuruksheeta, October 2006, Vol-54).

Gopal Kadekodi, Ravi Kanbur, Vijayendra Rao (2007) in their paper “**Governance and the Karnataka Model of Development**” have undertaken a comparative study of a few of papers from the interdisciplinary conference organized by the Institute for Social Science and Economic Change in Bangalore in June, 2005, and have pointed out the theme of governance, largely demonstrating that it remains a daunting challenge, that the theory of the Karnataka model has far surpassed its implementation, challenges that remain beyond regional inequalities including the slow incremental nature of changes in many parts

of the state, continuing gender inequalities, several shortcomings in the implementation of the Panchayat Raj Institution's reforms and the lack of attention to urban governance. This paper showed that the elites, higher castes & bureaucrats dominate the Panchayati Raj Institution of Karnataka. This paper also showed irregularities of Gram Sabha and low attendance mainly of female voters of this Sabha. This study suggests some methods for regularizing the Gram Sabha and strengthening Panchayati Raj Institution in Karnataka, limiting the number of Gram panchayats, and instituting incentives of panchayats committee members (Economic & Political Weekly, February 24 to 2nd March 2007, Vol. XL ii No. 8).

James Manor (2007) in his article **“Change in Karnataka Over the Last Generation Villages and the Wider Context”** examines social and political change of rural Karnataka since 1972. He pointed out that decline in the number of larger landholdings increased the number of medium, small and marginal holdings during this period. He pointed out that empowerment and funding of Panchayats in Karnataka have turned the Panchayats to political institutions. The Panchayat Raj Institution had abolished undemocratic social institutions such as casteism and had emphasized the growing importance of individual. He showed that democratic decentralization increased the number of people involved in corruption but amount of fund stolen decreased (Economic and Political Weekly, February 24 to 2nd March 2007, Vol. XL ii No.-8).

Timothy Besely, Rohini Pande, Vijayendro Rao (2007) in their paper **“Political Economy of Panchayats in South India”** examine how the functioning of the Panchayat system mandated by the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution has had an impact on the economic status of villages and the households within them. The study finds that the Gram Panchayats, created by this massive experiment in democratic decentralization, have had an effect on the delivery of public services, for example, in the targeting of beneficiaries of welfare programmes, but also that those positive outcomes are linked to the political elites thrown up by the system. They discuss political participation and the operation of Gram Sabhas. They show attendance of Gram Sabha meeting is very low. They find that the illiterate people are more attend in Gram Sabha meetings than literate people. Women are less likely to attend Gram Sabha meetings than the men. They are hopeful that the reservation in the Gram Panchayat can achieve policy change and better monitoring in order to enhance

the power of Gram Sabha, redrawing Panchayat's boundaries to create a powerful Panchayat system (Economic and Political Weekly, February 24 to 2nd March 2007, Vol. XL ii No.-8).

Kripa Ananthpur (2007) in his article “**Dynamics of Local Governance in Karnataka**” has pointed out that the informal traditional caste-based customary village councils (CVC) dominated by the village elites are still strong at the local level. Interaction between CVC and formal Panchayat bodies is a feature of Karnataka rural local self-government. Most of the people of Karnataka supported the role of CVC. Many of them said that the CVC control the corruption of Panchayats and create more and more self-resources. Women of Karnataka also supported the role of CVC at the rural level. CVC of Karnataka control the Panchayats by an active role in elections, involvement in Gram Panchayats activities, and taking active role in various development programmes for village development (Economic and Political Weekly, Feb 24 to 2nd March 2007, Vol XL ii No.-8).

Dr. M. Abdul Samad (2007) in his article “**Women Empowerment and Panchayati Raj Institution in Kerala**” has pointed out that the socio-political situation of Kerala is favorable for women empowerment in Panchayati Raj Institution. Even Muslim women can freely participate in socio-political activities in Kerala. Family members of women representatives do not create problems that would jeopardize their participation. So Kerala has become a model to others in gender justice in political participation (Kurukshetra, March 2007, Vol-55).

Mani Sanker Aiyar (2007) the union Minister of Panchayati Raj in a heading “**A Social Revolution: Panchayati Raj**” published in Kurukshetra has pointed out the aims and objectives of Panchayati Raj Institution. According to him, Panchayati Raj Institution constitutes a democratic miracle in India and curtailed the money and muscle power of local politics. He discussed the roadmap, transparency, incentives, training, election, funds and various movements of Panchayati Raj Institution in India. In conclusion he pointed out that the Panchayati Raj in India is thus becoming a part of the wider global movement towards recognizing localization as the necessary counterpart to globalization. (Kurukshetra, March-2007, Vol-55).

Sangeeta Nair (2007), reporter of The Statesmen, reported about “Cast Barriers” of Vattavada Panchayats in Idukki district of Kerala on 3 April 2007. In 2001 the left democratic government declared the panchayat to be crime free. But the reporter pointed out in his report that the Vottavada Panchayats are still run on the basis of caste-based ideology. He discussed the evils of caste-based ideology that has dominated this village and violates the Panchayats roles (The Statesman, 3rd of April, 2007).

Nandana Reddy, Damoder Acharya (2007) in their paper **“Striking at the Roots of Democracy”** have pointed out that the Karnataka panchayat Raj Act 1993 initially had provided for a relatively weak Gram Sabha. But landmark changes came in 2003. This recommendation established a two-tier system of Ward Sabha and Gram Sabha for effective and greater people’s participation and also listed as many as 29 functions for them. But they argued that the recent amendment to the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act giving state legislators powers over the Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha and Panchayat not only takes away the latter’s right to choose beneficiaries for government funded programmes but also affects the right of rural voters to participate in local self-government. Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha are the only platforms for the recognition of the right of every citizen to participate in decision making and implementation processes. They argued that this amendment to the Panchayat Raj Act puts MLAs in the driver’s seat in respect of the selection of any beneficiary for any schemes. So they argued that the present time is the darkest time of the Panchayats of Karnataka and for participatory democracy. (Economic and Political Weekly, May 5th to 11th May 2007, Vol.- XL ii No.18).

C. Bhujanga Rao, Manish Gupta, Pratap Ranjan Jena (2007) in their paper **“Central Flows to Panchayats: A Comparative Study of Madhya Pradesh”** have pointed out the centrally sponsored schemes going to the states and identify the components reaching the Panchayati Raj Institution. This paper shows the per-capita estimates of centrally sponsored schemes released to the Panchayati Raj Institutions for the year of 2004-05 and 2005-06 by Madhya Pradesh and other major states. This study shows that poorer states like Jharkhand, Bihar and Orissa received the highest per-capita amount as compared to the amount for the richer states like Punjab, Goa and Haryana, which received the lowest. West

Bengal received Rs.124.70 crore in 2004-05 and Rs.165.05 crore in 2005-06 (Economic and Political Weekly, February 3 to 9th, 2007, Vol Xiii No.-5).

Prof. Ranbir Shing (2007) in his article “**S.K.Dey’s Paradigm of Rural Development**” has pointed out that the fourth element in S.K.Dey’s paradigm of rural development was Panchayati Raj. He shows S.K.Dey trying to strengthen the Gram Sabha. He also shows that S.K.Dey played an important role in the reinvigoration of Panchayati Raj in the post-**Ashoke Mehata Committee Report (1978)** phase. He claims that Dey was one of the persons who influenced Rajiv Gandhi to take the initiative to constitutionalize Panchayati Raj through the 64th Amendment Bill in 1989. (Kuruksheetra, January 2007, Vol-55).

Dr. Yatindra Sing Sisodia (2007) in his paper “**Peoples Participation in Gram Sabha: Evidences From Villages of Madhya Pradesh**”– has focused on the Gram Sabha within the Panchayati Raj system in Madhya Pradesh. The major concern of the paper is to explore the nature of people’s participation in Gram Sabha in Madhya Pradesh. He pointed out that except in States like West Bengal, Kerala, Karnataka and Maharastra, the state governments showed very little interest to empower this institution; not only the state government but also political leaders remained apathetic. He pointed out the evidences from the states that the people’s participation has remained low although the state government introduced “**Gram Swaraj**” (**Gram Sansad**). He also pointed that the people were unaware of the Amendment package. He suggests some awareness programmes in order to increase the people’s participation in Gram Sabha Meeting. (Kuruksheetra, January 2007, Vol- 55).

Anand Teltumbde (2011) in his article “**India’s (Jati) Panchayati Raj**” – has pointed out that the reservation of women, SC/ST in Panchayati Raj Institution is a far cry. He pointed out that in case of woman Panchayat member it is usual practice that she only signs papers, while husband or father in law is *de facto* in control her. In the case of SC/ST, he or she is the bonded labourer of the Sarpanch who becomes a proxy for his role. In exceptional cases, where dalit sarpanchs have dared to exercise interest the dominant castes have unleashed terror against them. (Economic and Political Weekly, September 3 – 9, 2011, Vol XLvi no. 36).

Mathew C Kunnumkal (2011) in his paper “**Grassroots Level Democracy in India: An Assessment**” – has made an evolutionary study of local democracy from ancient India to the present day. He pointed out some advantages and some challenges of local democracy. He also pointed out that Villages Assemblies can emerge as a platform for expression of people’s needs and aspirations. He tried to say that involvement of people in decision making reduced the corruption and misuse of resources. He also highlights the successes of various schemes through Panchayats in Karnataka, Orissa, and Andhra Pradesh and UP. (Yojana, February’2011, Vol -55).

George Mathew (2011) in his article “**Needed – A New Deal for Panchyati Raj**” has highlighted various advantages of Panchayati Raj Institution. He writes that election of the local bodies is held regularly in all of the states, most of the state have State Election Commission and State Finance Commission, SC/STs and women participate easily in local govt., and that common people have now engaged themselves in rural development. But he pointed out that Panchayati Raj Institution is now facing enormous problems. He also pointed out that feudalism and patriarchy are the main problems plaguing the Panchayati Raj Institution. (Yojana, February 2011, Vol -55).

Furqan Ahmad and Akhtar Ali (2011) in their article ‘**Decentralized Governance and People Participation in Local Development**’ have critically analysed people’s participation for good governance at the grassroots level. They also focus on decentralization as a way of enhancing the effectiveness of people’s participation in local development. They also try to show the changing face of local development in the overall national development agenda, and trace and evaluate consistent evolution of local development policy. They conclude their article by showing effective local people must specifically relate to effective devolution of power to the localities. (The Indian Journal of Public Administration, April-June 2011, Vol. vii, no.2).

Rahul Benerjee, (2013), in his article ‘**What Ails Panchayati Raj?**’ has critically mentioned that two decades have elapsed since the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act institutionalized Panchayati Raj as the amendatory third tire of governance in India. He

mentioned that due to a lack of extensive devolution of the three Fs — functions, functionaries and funds — most of the Panchayati Raj Institutions still operate as poor adjuncts to the bureaucracy and higher level governments. He also reviews the process of devolving power to them and pinpoints the main obstacles in the path of establishing truly self governing local bodies in rural areas. (Economic and Political Weekly, July 27, 2013, Vol XL VII No 30).

“Panchayati Raj Development Report-1995”, Institute of Social Science, New Delhi, showed the philosophy and objectives of Panchayati Raj Institution of India. Scholars of this institution elaborately discussed the election procedure, reservation, functional autonomy, financial autonomy of Panchayati Raj Institution, and people’s participation. They indicate some weaknesses of Panchayati Raj Institutions: (i) dearth of funds (ii) creation of parallel power structure (iii) the reservation formula (iv) the reluctance of bureaucracy for decentralization of power (v) poor participation of people. They suggest some remedies for removing these weaknesses: to setup (i) State Election Commission (ii) State Finance Commissions (iii) District Planning Committee. They also suggest framing a law for facilitating the introduction of the Panchayati Raj Institution in the tribal areas. Provisions for setting up panchayat service selection board have been made on their suggestion. They have also suggested changing the present structure of intergovernmental relationship. (Panchayati Raj Development Report-1995, Institute of Social Science, New Delhi).

Ananth S. Panth and Om Prakash Bohra in their article **“Finances of Panchayati Raj Institution”** have pointed out that Panchayati Raj Institution of most of the states of India cannot carry out their functions due to lack of financial resources. This article indicates various sources of resources of Panchayati Raj Institution for overcoming this lacuna as recommended by various committees and commissions. This study shows that Maharashtra, Gujarat and West Bengal only have done well through participative approach to rural development. They suggest strengthening the Panchayati Raj Institution financially (Quarterly Journal of the Indian Institute of Public Administration).

In **“Rural Development Through Panchayats: The West Bengal Experience**, the **Government of West Bengal** highlights the structural, financial and functional background

of Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal. This paper shows the economic and socio-cultural development of West Bengal emerging from the Panchayati Raj Institution under the Left Front rule. This paper also shows various developmental programmes of West Bengal compared to those in the other states of India. As evident from this paper, the development of rural West Bengal has come under the Land Reforms and the 'Operation Barga'. In conclusion this paper tries to show that Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal under Left Front rule has been a success story. (Government of West Bengal).

1.6 Significance of the Study

In order to assess the working of the Panchayati Raj Institutions, it is necessary to study the concept of participatory local governance and development.

Nowadays, it is very important to study the participatory local Governance and development for the development at the local and rural levels. It is of great significance and interest now to study the people's participation in the various development processes at the level of grassroot society. Results obtained from such micro-level empirical research might increase the people's participation and help the concerned people's participation in development programmes at the rural level,

Gram Sansad is a direct forum of electorates of a Gram Panchayat constituency. It is clear that the Gram Sansad is the only place for common people. The main function of this institution is to guide and advise the Gram Panchayat in regard to the schemes for economic development and social justice, identification of beneficiaries, and constitution of one or more beneficiary committees for ensuring active participation of people in various programmes. It is, therefore, of interest to examine the participation of people at Gram Sansad and the activities of Gram Sansad for the success of participatory local governance.

1.7 Chapterization

The objectives of the study as guided by the research question will be presented through the following chapters:-

Chapter One – Introduction

Chapter Two - Participatory local Governance and Development:
The Theoretical Frame Work of the Research

Chapter Three – Participatory Development and Local Governance:
The Case of Panchayati Raj Institution of West Bengal.

Chapter Four – Brief Profile of the District of Cooch Behar.

Chapter Five - Facilitating Participatory Development: Role of Gram Sansad &
Factors of Non Participation in Gram Sansad.

Chapter Six – Summary and Concluding Observation of the Research.

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