



ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Economics

TRENDS IN FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OF VARIOUS ZILLA PANCHAYATS IN KARNATAKA STATE

KEY WORDS: Constitutional 73rd Amendment, Panchayat Raj Institutions, Financial Performance of Panchayath Raj Institutions, Financial Performance of Zilla Panchayats, Central and State Finance Commissions, Grants from the State and Centre.

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The 73rd and 74th Amendments to the Indian constitution have cast heavy responsibilities on political leaders, economic planners and administrative bureaucracy of the country in a measure much greater than what is seen apparently being realized. The vision of decentralized governance from the 73 constitutional Amendments authority to the panchayat raj Institutions in Karnataka's journey has been admirable up till now not complete in terms of curbing the intra-state disparities. In this direction the present paper makes an attempt to study the financial performance in Karnataka state across various divisions. This will help us to understand the extent of the funds available in terms of annual percentage change, Differences in terms of various divisions and also to study what are the districts receiving funds lower than the state average figures. Towards this we have collected time series data for about 15 years and worked out the Compound Growth Rate (CGR) to look at annual performance of all the districts across four divisions of the Karnataka state. The analysis of the data clearly reveals that Panchayat Raj Institutions have been given step-motherly treatment by both the State and Central Governments. The development of village India is possible by strengthening ZPs, TPs and GPs. However, political will is missing in this direction. Though there is a criticism that PRIs is nothing but the decentralization of corruption but the point is at least to that extent the money is diverted or shared by a larger group. So many academicians and researchers feel that decentralization of corruption itself is some positive change. Therefore, in the best possible way the finances have to be given to the Panchayats so that the Gandhiji's vision of development can be seen in the village India. Therefore, it is suggested that there need to be consistency in the allocation of resources to the PRIs so that better planning can be taken care as it will lead to rural development in general and PRIs in general.

Down from the time of Rig Vedas to Charles Metcalf's characterization of villages as 'republics' to the new famous dictum of 'power to the people' by Lord Rippon (Hundred and twenty five years ago), followed by the Bengal initiative in 1885, or indeed the more recent Gram Swaraj concept of Mahatma Gandhi. Since from that time Panchayat Raj has been the recurrent theme in our political discourse. Following Article 40 of the constitution, 1953 saw the first central initiative to establish local governments, this was followed by the 1963 recommendations on fiscal devolution. In its most potent form the credit of ushering in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) must go to the dynamism of the youthful Prime Minister the late Shri Rajiv Gandhi the then Prime Minister of India. In the modern rendition to the efforts have witnessed a long travail and finally by 1986 the necessity to amend the constitution was recognized. Despite the faltering attempt of the 64th Constitutional Amendment, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi pressed on with the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments, convinced that it encapsulated the vision and injunction by our founding fathers. He was acutely conscious that the fruition of the ambitious project of Panchayati Raj would take at least a generation to get deep rooted in the village India.

Through much debate and discussion there seems to have emerged a consensual clarifying response in terms of organizational frame and processes that need to be followed

in case of the PRIs. The peculiar federal set up that India is of course comes in the way of full and immediate implementation in the country with Centre, State and PRIs. After all, it is said and done, it boils down to effective implementation, which necessarily has the prerequisite of empowerment of PRIs through effective devolution of finances.

The Polity, Economy and Administration are entwined in a triangular set-up that resembles not a light romantic comedy but rather a rough menage a trios and it is essential that they find a way through to EMPOWER, with adequate financial strength, for ensuring smooth attainment of the Development goals of the Indian society. This is how, in the simple story of poor PRIs and what to do about it has thickens and for all the grand designs in other related spheres and aspects, unless we are ready to put money, where our mouth is, the goal of transforming India into a 'developed' super power will suffer the fate of the Tantalus (Pethe Abhay and Mala Lalvani, 2008).

Over 28 years since the 73rd and 74th Amendments introduced Articles 280 (3) (bb) and (c) into the constitution, which mandated the Union Finance Commission to determine the measures needed to augment the Consolidated Fund of a State to supplement the resources of the Panchayats and the Municipalities in the State. We are at an interesting juncture where we can trace the evolution of the grand system that provides a slice from the divisible pool of the Union government to Local Bodies (LBs) via the State Governments. The Tenth, Eleventh and Twelfth Finance Commissions broadly recommended grants for the LBs, amounting to around 1 to 1.5 per cent of the divisible pool. The Thirteenth Finance Commission (TFC) broke fresh ground in increasing the allocation to around 2.5 per cent of the divisible pool and earmarking a part of the grant for performance, based on the meeting of conditionality that it laid down.

The above trend was continued by the Fourteenth Finance Commission (FFC), which recommended nearly 4.5 per cent of the divisible pool as the grant and prescribed simpler constitutionalities that were to be met. For the first time, the FFC restricted the grant only to the Rural Local Bodies (RLBs) at the first mile, the Village Panchayats, and mandated that these funds be used only for the delivery of core services that have been devolved to them across nearly all States (Devaluation of Union Commission Grants to Panchayat, A study for the Fifteenth Finance Commission By Accountability Initiative, 2019). Further, the states are not bothered to take action on the SFC reports. This is against the spirit of Constitutional provision. They have to follow the convention set by the Centre in implementing the Central Finance Commissions (CFC) recommendations with the states. Further, the role of CFC in supplementing the resources of local governments is very important. However, the three FCs at the Central level followed adhoc measures without any impact on the Local Government Finances (LGFs). The present 13th FC of India has to link its recommendations not only to the recommendations of SFC but also on the states' implementation (Babu, 2009).

Karnataka is often cited as an important example of a pro decentralization state. This is mainly due to the earlier

legislation passed by the state during 1983 which was regarded as a landmark step. After the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, Karnataka was the first State to pass the Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993, as per the 73rd Amendment and conducted elections to Gram Panchayats (GPs) in December that year. This was the beginning of a full-fledged three-tier system of panchayat raj in Karnataka, making use of the 11th Schedule in the Constitution to decentralize power and functions to panchayat raj bodies at all the three levels of PRIs.

The Karnataka Panchayat Raj Act, 1993 provides for three tier structure of PRIs – Zilla Panchayats at district level, Taluk Panchayat at intermediate level and Gram Panchayat at village level. The other salient features are providing reservation for women, Other Backward Classes and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. This reservation applies not only to election of members but also to the election of office-bearers or chairpersons of these institutions. The Gram Sabhas (GSs) and the Ward Sabhas in Karnataka are the soul of panchayat raj and the idea is to progressively strengthen their functioning to ensure full participation of the people with some responsibility (Study of Panchayat Finances in Karnataka Report Prepared by, Institute for Development and Empowerment, Mysore, Submitted to Decentralisation Analysis Cell - Government of Karnataka 2014).

The democratic local governments to be called 'self-governments' should have some degree of financial autonomy. This means that these institutions should have some own tax powers, share in certain taxes and duties of the state, grants-in-aid from the state and the Centre, loan raising powers etc. From this point that emerges is that the local governments should not heavily depend upon the state and Central governments for their financial needs. They should be in a position to generate resources as much as possible from their own sources. The resources they have at their command, as far as possible, should match their responsibilities. In the absence of own resource raising powers, the local governments would in all probability become only spending agencies and always dependent upon the discretion of the state governments in the transfer of grants. Non-tax is another important source of revenue for the PRIs. In Karnataka all the three-tiers have been vested with powers to collect non-tax revenue from their own properties and assets and utilize the same for their own needs and at their will (Government of Karnataka, 1996).

Fiscal decentralization in Karnataka is far from complete in terms of increasing own source revenue (OSR) mobilization and making use of increased spending for desired goals. Low resource base, weak accountability mechanisms, lack of monitoring and evaluation of schemes and low utilization rates in centrally sponsored schemes have created a wedge between Karnataka's well-developed and backward regions. In the last twenty years, what Karnataka has so far achieved can be somewhat attributed to 'partial decentralization'. There is a need to create adequate fiscal space for decentralization to thrive in the state whereby rural masses benefit from inclusion in the growth processes and reform efforts are made for more durable, richer and fuller decentralization. (Babu, et al, 2018).

Funds Flow to Zilla Panchayats:

Zilla Panchayats receive the funds from the Consolidated Fund of the State & Central Governments in the following categories.

- Planned Funds.
- Non-Planned funds.
- Additional grants

Plan & Non-plan funds are released by the State Government to the Z.P. in a Quarterly basis & ZP in turn releases these

funds to the District level Officers of different Departments, Taluk Panchayats (TPs) & Grama Panchayats (GPs) in monthly/Quarterly basis. Funds are also released from the Central Government to the various Programmes/Schemes implemented through the Zilla Panchayat & its subsidiary units such as TPs and GPs. Clarification regarding the planned funds, non-planned funds and additional grants are given below.

Planned \Fund:

It is received both from State as well as Central Government for the Execution of developmental activities/works including the creation of the new infrastructure & their maintenance. In addition, various centrally sponsored schemes such as Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act/Programme (MGNREGA), 12th & 13th FINANCE, ARWS, IAY, SGSY, TSC etc., are implemented in the country. For the Welfare of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) & Scheduled Tribes (STs) grants are also released through a separate programme called Special Component Programme (SCP). For the planned programmes the financial allocation is made by the Government on the basis of;

- Population
- Actual Needs
- Backwardness (Determined by specific parameters)

Non-Plan Funds:

It is mainly meant to meet the committed expenditure of the different departments (mainly the salary) & also the maintenance of the infrastructures which are already created. These funds are exclusively released to the Zilla panchayat from the State Government.

Additional Grants:

These funds are not provided in the budget of the ZP & hence it is called the Extra budgetary or non-budgetary Grants. Usually it is released by the State/Central Governments to be met out the emergency needs such as to provide drinking water, formation of roads, to create rural employment at the drought prone areas, for the control of epidemic diseases & to meet the deficiency of the budget (Ramya and Manjunath, 2019).

With this background of information an effort is made to study the financial performance of ZPs in Karnataka state across various divisions. This will help us to understand the extent of the funds available in terms of annual percentage change, Differences in terms of various divisions and also to study what are the districts receiving funds lower than the state average figures. Towards this we have collected time series data for about 15 years and worked out the Compound Growth Rate (CGR) to look at annual performance of all the districts across four divisions of the Karnataka state.

The Table-1 contains the growth rates of the financial performance across various districts in Bangalore Division. In Bangalore division we have nine districts and the performance of each district is presented in the same table. Compound Growth Rates are given for two periods starting from 2003-04 to 2012-13 and 2013-14 to 2017-18 (Since the data is available with out gap for these years we have considered the time period, otherwise there is no special reason for the selection of the time period). The table clearly reveals that Bangalore urban district has been the district, which is mobilizing/receiving more funds, year by year, as it shown the GR of about 16.48 per cent for the first period to 41.92 per cent in the second period starting from 2013-14 to 2017-18. Even the overall GR has been very high in case of the Bangalore Urban district showing 21.91 per cent per annum compared to any other district in the division.

Chikkaballapur and Ramnagara are the other two districts, which have shown the GR at higher level compared to the

other six districts. For the Chikkaballapur district the GR has shown around 19 per cent and for the Ramanagar district it is more than 17 per cent. Interestingly we need to keep an issue in mind that both the Chikkaballapur and Ramnagara districts have been formed very recently. May be that is the reason why the GR in terms of finances to these districts has been more. Even Shimoga district has shown the GR little

higher side compared to the other districts. In Bangalore division Kolar district has shown the lowest GR in terms of receiving the funds. Kolar district seems to be the dry district, funds need to flow very steadily to this district but the GR has shown very low in the first period and in the subsequent periods it is better. It can be concluded based on the CGR for the funds mobilization in Bangalore division that there is stability in terms of funds flow.

Table-1: Financial Performance of PRI in the Districts of Bangaluru Division (CGR in %).

Sl. No.	Years	Bangaluru - Urban	Bangaluru - Rural	Chikkaballapur	Chitradurga	Davanagere	Kolar	Ramnagar	Shivamoga	Tumkur
01	2003-04	3499	5573	NA	4979	4915	6338	NA	4582	6821
02	2004-05	3895	5969	NA	5419	5360	6731	NA	5109	7624
03	2005-06	8007	11499	NA	10691	10547	13904	NA	10502	15172
04	2006-07	8787	12615	NA	14986	14981	16426	NA	11504	16987
05	2007-08	8635	12443	NA	14673	15015	16245	NA	10939	17958
06	2008-09	8560	15647	7786	12418	12444	8286	7230	11065	18942
07	2009-10	11692	17023	9320	13566	14491	9802	8196	13607	22100
08	2010-11	11194	17050	10291	13202	14667	9872	8417	13580	23497
09	2011-12	12643	17070	10895	13114	14692	9589	8289	14414	23911
10	2012-13	17330	19197	13655	17352	18007	13020	10323	19280	26781
CGR in %		16.477	13.972	13.653	11.534	12.958	3.091	7.504	14.258	15.195
01	2013-14	24663	10470	13664	19950	19680	15013	11668	23849	29890
02	2014-15	29878	12894	15640	24013	14382	18723	13431	25186	35201
03	2015-16	32333	13546	17615	26205	26227	18583	15193	27331	37095
04	2016-17	41513	14095	19152	27788	29480	19152	16107	29143	40223
05	2017-18	120441	43085	74547	85779	47445	65067	52065	86301	128323
CGR in %		41.916	33.888	43.274	35.840	28.117	34.390	37.341	31.234	35.628
Over all GR in %		21.914	7.509	19.321	14.396	12.129	9.416	17.792	16.358	15.441

Note: 1). Figures are in Lakhs.

2). The data, for all the tables, has been taken from various issues of Budget Documents of the Government of Karnataka. The performance of the finances in the Belgam Division has been presented in the Table-2. The table reveals that in the first period i.e., from 2003-04 to 2012-13 the GR has been very much stable for all the districts with minor differences. For instance the highest GR seems to be 18.704 per cent for the Bijapur district and the lowest seems to be in the Belagam district showing the GR of 15.26 per cent. This clearly indicates that the performance of the PRIs finances across the districts has been steady compared to the Bangalore Division during the first part of the period of analysis. However, during the second period i.e., from 2013-14 to 2017-18 there is a lot of change in the CGR where there

is a wide gap between the lowest and the highest GR between various districts in this division. For instance the highest GR seems to be in Belagaum district i.e., 42.82 per cent and even Bijapur also near to that (41.86 per cent) and the least seems to be in the Haveri district showing the CGR at 22.52 per cent per annum. It is highly difficult to say why this kind of trends and variation in terms of ZP finances. If this is the trend it is highly difficult to take up the developmental works in a stable manner. Again the overall GR stability/consistency maintained in terms of the funds flow as there is no major difference between the lowest and the highest GR in terms of ZP finances.

Table-2: Financial Performance of PRI in the Districts of Belgaum Division (CGR in %).

Sl. No.	Years	Bagalakovote	Belagam	Bijapur	Dharwad	Gadag	Haveri	UK
01	2003-04	3646	8806	4226	2888	2337	3419	4104
02	2004-05	4113	9818	4521	3237	2668	3841	4403
03	2005-06	9393	20305	10612	6978	6178	8889	9512
04	2006-07	11926	22644	12737	8159	7074	10285	11069
05	2007-08	11516	22249	13007	8040	6716	10127	11209
06	2008-09	11550	21995	13843	8162	7027	10673	11530
07	2009-10	14357	27211	16142	9128	8669	11731	13565
08	2010-11	14299	26949	17237	9056	8769	12045	13320
09	2011-12	14221	30094	17830	9845	8809	12578	14619
10	2012-13	18761	40101	23621	13785	10684	15885	19175
CGR in %		17.130	15.265	18.704	15.314	15.968	15.724	16.076
01	2013-14	22677	46964	25663	16140	12016	17698	21106
02	2014-15	27052	33213	20793	26942	13914	20440	38863
03	2015-16	31427	69787	34910	22527	15811	23182	25650
04	2016-17	36343	70280	40134	23911	17549	25880	27293
05	2017-18	55715	191841	106121	68094	43109	43422	78338
CGR in %		23.282	42.820	41.859	31.783	32.142	22.520	25.477
Over all GR in %		17.212	17.278	18.186	18.689	16.062	15.076	17.252

Note: Figures are in Lakhs.

The CGR performance of the Panchayat finances at the district level in Mysuru Division seems to be very much normal and there is no major change across various districts. Mysuru district showed the highest GR of 14.784 and lowest seems to be in Udupi and Kodugu districts in the first period of our data

analysis i.e., from 2003-04 to 2012-13 (Table-3). Even other districts also in the Mysuru division the performance is better and steady. There is a lot of variation during the second period starting from 2013-14 to 2017-18 where in, certain years, there is abnormal increase in the absolute change in

the figures. It is highly difficult to give the reason for this. For instance for Chamrajnagar district there is abnormal jump in the absolute figures from 120.66 lakhs to 918.41 lakhs from 2013-14 to 2017-18. Except in Udupi district all the other districts have got the same kind of trend. The CGRs are highest in case of the Chamrajnagar district followed by

Hasan. The lowest seems to be in Udupi but it is steady starting from 2003-04 to 2017-18. And also the over all CGR also it is maintained. There can be discrepancy in case of the PRIs finances so that the planning will be better and the development can be maintained. The abrupt change in the allocations lead to so many inconsistency problems.

Table-3: Financial Performance of PRI in the Districts of Mysuru Division (CGR in %).

Sl. No.	Years	Chamrajnagar	Chikkamagaluru	Kodagu	D.Kannada	Hasan	Mandya	Mysuru	Udupi
01	2003-04	3316	4344	2301	4205	5285	4661	5296	3089
02	2004-05	3687	4880	2456	4730	5787	5213	5829	3414
03	2005-06	6930	8898	4396	8324	10693	9709	11935	5514
04	2006-07	7821	10211	4702	8999	12492	10598	14284	5626
05	2007-08	7779	9795	4747	8606	12032	10232	13838	5388
06	2008-09	8124	9744	4370	9228	12206	10932	14364	5346
07	2009-10	9479	11448	5153	11106	14052	12250	16697	6287
08	2010-11	9570	11089	4863	11172	14116	13317	17024	5960
09	2011-12	9436	11570	4840	11067	14073	13381	17220	6519
10	2012-13	10940	14461	6599	15062	17769	17216	22175	8985
CGR in %		12.582	11.734	9.467	12.617	14.393	13.187	14.784	9.419
01	2013-14	12066	15593	7194	16365	19541	19456	25312	10072
02	2014-15	13747	19003	23093	23806	8347	60923	30198	11219
03	2015-16	15429	20079	8834	22524	26146	24412	34887	12365
04	2016-17	16817	20850	10014	25178	28724	25970	40497	13696
05	2017-18	91841	64780	26975	69151	89734	76611	109586	14567
CGR in %		53.126	34.193	19.813	34.156	41.863	20.785	38.049	9.828
Over all GR in %		15.571	13.874	14.342	15.937	13.114	16.917	16.977	10.890

Note: Figures are in Lakhs.

Interestingly in all the districts of the four divisions in the first period of the analysis i.e., 2003-04 to 2012-13 there is consistency in terms of the CGR of the financial performance of the PRIs finances. Even in Gulbarga division the same kind of trend is noticed. The lowest GR seems to be 12.780 per cent in case of the Gulbarga district and the highest seems to be in case of the Raichur district, which is 17.628 per cent (Table-4) Therefore, one can say that there is no major difference between the lowest and highest GRs in the Gulbarga division for the first period of the analysis. Interestingly in case of the Gulbarga division, even in the second period of analysis, there is consistency in terms of the CGR of the PRIs performance. Because there is no major difference in case of the lowest and highest values of the GRs. However, compared to the first period of analysis in the second

period, the GRs are very much high, leading to the increase is some where around two to three times are more. Investigations have to be conducted about why this kind of major differences between the first period of analysis to the second period of analysis. Surprisingly, in the overall performance, consistency is maintained between various districts in the division. Only Yadgiri district has shown some difference where it is very high consisting of 24.760, which is the highest. Yadgiri district came into existence very late and this may be the explanation for the difference. The district came into existence in the year 2010-11 and the data has been computed from the same year. Since it was a new district, formed recently, may be the reason why the fund allocation is more and therefore CGR is more.

Table-4: Financial Performance of PRI in the Districts of Gulbarga Division (CGR in %).

Sl. No.	Years	Bellary	Bidar	Gulbarga	Koppal	Raichur	Yadgiri
01	2003-04	4642	4307	7093	3378	4297	NA
02	2004-05	5104	4689	7858	3602	4687	NA
03	2005-06	10810	9772	16905	7955	10208	NA
04	2006-07	13726	12222	24236	10226	15562	NA
05	2007-08	13169	13147	25840	10343	15727	NA
06	2008-09	13682	11419	23075	11057	14659	NA
07	2009-10	16184	11747	26027	12353	16350	NA
08	2010-11	15765	13132	19557	12335	16946	8501
09	2011-12	15988	12997	20606	12319	17427	9273
10	2012-13	21594	15557	27716	14230	22710	11451
CGR in %		15.831	12.827	12.780	15.922	17.628	16.062
01	2013-14	24568	16561	31296	16397	25569	12564
02	2014-15	22102	30831	29598	19762	23834	14718
03	2015-16	34475	25450	41693	23127	33352	16872
04	2016-17	39242	28103	48271	25637	38539	18661
05	2017-18	92431	85241	121073	90078	80290	60738
CGR in %		38.045	37.496	37.644	44.302	31.905	40.338
Over all GR in %		16.872	15.993	14.035	17.274	16.665	24.760

Note: Figures are in Lakhs.

CONCLUSION:

Panchayat Raj Institutions have been given step-motherly

treatment by both the State and Central Governments. The development of village India is possible by strengthening ZPs, TPs and GPs. However, political will is missing in this direction. Though there is a criticism that PRIs is nothing but

the decentralization of corruption but the point is at least to that extent the money is diverted or shared by a larger group. So many academicians and researchers feel that decentralization of corruption itself is some positive change. Therefore, in the best possible way the finances have to be given to the Panchyats so that the Gandhiji's vision of development can be seen in the village India. Therefore, it is suggested that there need to be consistency in the allocation of resources to the PRIs so that better planning can be taken care as it will lead to rural development in general and PRIs in general.

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