

CHAPTER 4

TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN WESTBENGAL

Modern West Bengal is a truncated State comprising an area of 88,752 square kilometres (34,267 sq mi); a legacy of British colonialism who finally left the country in 1947. The very name Bengal in the past was probably derived from a word Bonga- a popular Austro- Asiatic word very commonly used by the Santhal, one of the major agricultural tribes of India, signifying ' holy' or 'super-natural power'. This indicates the interlaced association of an older Austric- speaking group of the region and even today in many place- names of this state this is being reflected. The physical features of the state will appear, to a casual observer, a land with diversities, namely, snowcapped mountainous regions with sky- kissed peaks in the extreme north, terraced undulations, slowly sloping down to the south with variable gradations, mixed with alluvium and ultimately embracing the foaming and dancing bay in the southern tip, which is geographically known as 'coastal sandy region'. While the sub mountainous region is known as 'Tarai' that proceeds southernly as the northern plain. The south-eastern part of the region is dotted with thick and monotonous estuarine jungles, popularly known as Sundarbans where plenty of Sundari (*Heritiera fomes*) trees grow and shelter the famous Royal Bengal tiger along with wild animals. The major portion of this Sundarbans has now fallen in Bangladesh which was curved out of the Indian Union by the knives of the politicians and ultimately accepted mostly by many of the leaders of our country. The south-western tract has originated from the archaic rugged terrain of Chhotanagpur, evenly distributed with granite outcrops or small hillocks. Scanty jungle of drawf Sal (*Shorea Robusta*) and other trees and plants clothed some of the surface lands. The availability of plenty of core stone tools belonging to the Palaeolithic period which goes as far back as to an approximation of 1,00,000 years, supplemented by chipped, ground and polished stone tools signifies the beginning of agriculture and settled human life.¹

On such a backdrop, we find living a good number of so called tribal communities who are popularly known as Adivasis, i.e. the Bhumiputras, the early settlers or 'autochthonese'. These groups of people have simple technology. For conceptual purposes, they speak a common language or dialect, have a common culture, are more clan-based, i.e., kin oriented or ethnocentric in temperament with less hierarchy and less economic specialisation, indicating 'mechanical solidarity' as propounded by Durikheim. The erstwhile Bengal Presidency had its headquarters at Calcutta, consisting of Provinces of Orissa-Bihar- and a potion of Bengal of the relevant time, which is now known as Bangladesh. Even Mughal ruler Sah Suja (1639-1659) had its head quarters at Midnapur. However, the so-called Bhumiputras or the tribal group of people lived since the hoary past and had the advantage of interaction which in many cases alienated them from the one group and the other and sometimes brought many into one through blending processes of assimilation. It is also an accepted fact that the tribals groups are not permanent crystalline structure in any stage of history. What with the waves of migration of the dominant groups and what with the fear of their annihilation of the recalcitrant elements and by the viable acculturating processes, they

were compelled to take shelter in the inhospitable regions which are less accessible areas, just to keep their body and soul together and keep their cultural entities. But harsh historical processes, prompted by socio-economic needs, brought many of them to a lasting assimilation scene and threw them into the arms of the broader societies around. Even so, today we find in many places distinctiveness in their cultural and pristine religious spheres a reflection though slow but steady processes of interaction in various ways, exposing them to many transformational conditions. However, they are composed of a peculiar tribal virility larded with simplicity, and also they lack the desire of possession of much material objects.² In West Bengal there is no Scheduled area. The State Government has not proposed that any area should be declared as Scheduled Area in West Bengal.[Scheduled Areas are defined in the Indian Constitution as 'such areas as the President may by order declare to be Scheduled Areas'; they are meant to benefit from special administrative arrangements. 'The criteria followed for declaring an area as Scheduled Area are preponderance of tribal population; and marked disparity in economic standard of the people'. Fifth Schedule Areas are said to be 'tribal dominated areas', and include areas located in ten states, stretching from Gujarat to Orissa].

In point of fact, we shall deal with the tribal groups who have been Scheduled, i.e., who get the advantage of constitutional benefits on the basis of which money is allocated for their upliftment. In this connection, it may be said that some tribals, in many cases, are found to live in distinct political boundaries or states which have been divided for administrative purposes. The list of Scheduled Tribes, as originally notified by the President of India in 1950 under Article 342 of the Constitution included only seven tribes for the State of West Bengal. Their population as per 1951 census was 11.65 lakhs. This list was subsequently amended to include nineteen more tribes for this State in accordance with the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act 1956. This number was recommended by the Backward Classes Commission which was constituted by the Government of India. The total tribal population of these nineteen tribal communities according to 1951 census was 13,44,527. Again, we find changes in this figure due to reorganization of States in 1956 when West Bengal was given some portion of Bihar. Purulia, a separate district, was formed and a corridor was provided to the northern side of West Bengal which also previously belonged to Bihar. The list was further modified and revised to some extent, bringing the total number of the tribes to 41. The total population of the forty-one tribal communities in the reconstituted State of West Bengal was 15.67 lakhs forming approximately 6 per cent of the total population of the State. The list was further modified as per the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 1976 to thirty eight tribal communities and with the limitation of the area and the removal of the area restriction these communities started receiving the status of Scheduled Tribes throughout the State of West Bengal, unlike the situation prevailing earlier when the area restriction, within the list of communities was a special characteristic. The total population of these thirty eight communities, as per 1971 Census was 25,32,969 showing an increase of 23.31 per cent over the population recorded in 1961 census (20,54,081). As per 1981 Census, total population of these existing thirty-eight Scheduled Tribes is 30,70,672 showing a growth rate of 21.23 per cent during 1971-81

decade. The Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal constituted 5.63 per cent of total population of the State in 1981 whereas their percentage of coverage in 1971 was 5.72. This state occupied thirteenth rank position in 1981 as per the tribal concentration whereas the position was eleven in 1971.

4.1 A Brief Account of Demographic Particulars of Scheduled Tribes Population in West Bengal.

A) Population: The total population of West Bengal at 2001 Census has been 80,176,197. Of this 4,406,794 persons are Scheduled Tribes constituting 5.5 per cent of the total population of the state. The state has registered 15.7 percent decadal growth of Scheduled Tribes population in 1991-2000. The list of Scheduled Tribe which had thirty eight tribal communities was again modified by the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders (Amendment) Act, 2002³, where two communities i.e. Limbu (Subba) and Tamang were [inserted by Act 10 of 2003, section 4 and the second schedule] were added to the thirty eight notified tribal communities of West Bengal. As per the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950, the following were listed as scheduled tribes in West Bengal.

1. Asur
2. Baiga
3. Badia, Bediya
4. Bhumji
5. Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yolmo
6. Birhor
7. Birjia
8. Chakma
9. Chero
10. Chik Baraik
11. Garo
12. Gond
13. Gorait
14. Hajang
15. Ho
16. Karmali
17. Kharwar
18. Khond
19. Kisan
20. Kora
21. Korwa
22. Lepcha
23. Lodha, Kheria, Kharia
24. Lohara, Lohra

25. Magh
26. Mahali
27. Mahli
28. Mal Pahariya
29. Mech
30. Mru
31. Munda
32. Nagesia
33. Oraon
34. Parhaiya
35. Rabha
36. Santal
37. Sauria Paharia
38. Savar
- [39. Limbu (Subba)
40. Tamang.]⁴

Table 4.1

DISTRICT WISE SCHEDULED TRIBE POPULATION DISTRIBUTION: 2001 CENSUS

SR.	DISTRICT	Total Population	ST Population	% ST	% WBST
**	WEST BENGAL	80176197	4406794	5.50	100.00
01.	DARJEELING	1609172	204167	12.69	4.63
02.	JALPAIGURI	3401173	641638	18.87	14.56
03.	KOCH BIHAR	2479155	14246	0.57	0.32
04.	UTTAR DINAJPUR	2441794	124865	5.11	2.83
05.	DAKSHIN DINAJPUR	1503178	242317	16.12	5.50
06.	MALDA	3290468	227047	6.90	5.15
07.	MURSHIDABAD	5866569	75953	1.29	1.72
08.	BIRBHUM	3015422	203127	6.74	4.61
09.	BARDHAMAN	6895514	441832	6.41	10.63
10.	NADIA	4604827	113891	2.47	2.58
11.	24 PARGANAS (N)	8934286	198936	2.23	4.51
12.	HUGHLI	5041976	212062	4.21	4.81
13.	BANKURA	3192695	330783	10.36	7.51
14.	FURULIYA	2536516	463452	18.27	10.52
15.A.	FURBA MEDINIPUR	4417377	26504	0.60	0.60
15.B.	PASCHIM MEDINIPUR	5193411	772177	14.87	17.52
16.	HAORA	4273099	19168	0.45	0.43
17.	KOLKATA	4572876	9810	0.21	0.22
18.	24-PARGANAS (S)	6906689	84766	1.23	1.92

Source: Census of India 2001.

Ultimately we find 40 scheduled tribes distributed in different parts of West Bengal. There are some areas where some tribes are concentrated, but many more tribal people had to migrate long ago due to various forces of push and pull, viz., demand for tribal labour in Tea Plantation areas, the urgent requirements of the Zamindars for clearing the jungles in the Sundarbans and also to meet the demand of the Indigo Planters as also the seasonal agricultural labours ('Namal', i.e., coming down to the low land) to the region where the owners of lands need them during sowing and harvesting season. Forces of urbanisation have also their share as they provide these groups some attraction for earning easy money as labourers. These have been the forces which, in the circumstantial exigencies, brought the tribals and encouraged them to form satellite villages in and around the city centres or the areas of affluence.

District-wise Scheduled Tribe population distribution is given in the Table 4.1. As per 2001 census Scheduled Tribes numbering 4,406,794 persons constituted 5.5 percent of the total population of the state. Santals constitute more than half (51.8 per cent) of the total Scheduled Tribes population of the state. Oraons (14 per cent), Mundas (7.8 per cent), Bhumij (7.6 per cent) and Kora (3.2 per cent) are the major Schedules Tribes having sizeable population. Along with Santal, they constitute nearly 85 per cent of the state's total Scheduled Tribe population. The Lodha, Mahali, Butia, Bedia, and Savar are the remaining Scheduled Tribes, and having population of one per cent or more. The rest of the Scheduled Tribes are very small in population size.⁵

Population and proportion of ten major Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal, as per 2001 census, are given in the Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

SL. No	Name of the Scheduled Tribe	Total Population	Proportion to the total Scheduled Tribe population
1	All Scheduled Tribes	4,406,794	100%
2	Santal	2,280,540	51.8
3	Oraon	617,138	14.0
4	Munda	341,542	7.8
5	Bhumij	336,436	7.6
6	Kora	142,789	3.2
7	Lodha	84,966	1.9
8	Mahali	76,102	1.7
9	Bhutia	60,091	1.4
10	Bedia	55,979	1.3
11	Savar	43,599	1.0

Source: Census of India 2001.

The Scheduled Tribes in the state are predominantly residing in the rural areas (93.9 per cent). Among Lodha, Savar, and Bedia more than 95 per cent are residing in the rural areas. Contrary to the overall situation among the majority of tribes, Bhutia has recorded the highest 34 per cent urban population. The Mahali (10.2 per cent) and Kora (9.9 per cent) are the other Scheduled Tribes having comparatively concentration in urban areas. More than half of the

Scheduled Tribes population of the state is concentrated in the four districts namely Medinapur, Jalpaiguri, Purulia, and Bardhaman. Of the remaining districts, Bankura, Maldah, Uttar Dinajpur, and Dakshin Dinajpur have sizeable Scheduled Tribes population.

B) Sex Ratio: As per 2001 Census, the sex ratio of total Scheduled Tribes population in the state is 982, which is higher than the national average for Scheduled Tribes (978). The state also has recorded a higher child sex ratio (0-6 age group) of 981 as compared to the aggregated national figure (973) for the Scheduled Tribes. The sex ratio among Bhutia (999) is the highest among the major Scheduled Tribes. But the child sex ratio (951) is low among them. Bedia has recorded the lowest sex ratio of 962. The situation is just the reverse among Bedia.⁶

C) Literacy and Educational Level: Among all Scheduled Tribes, 43.4 per cent of the total population has been returned as literate, which is lower than the national average (47.1 per cent). The male literacy rate of 57.4 per cent and female of 29.2 per cent, show a gender disparity in literacy. Of the ten major Scheduled Tribes, Bhutia with 72.6 per cent overall literacy, 80.2 per cent male and 65.2 per cent female literacy respectively, is well ahead of others. Savars are at the other extreme having 26.3 per cent overall literacy and 16 per cent female literacy rate.

Literacy Rate among ten major Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal, as per 2001 census, is given in the Table 4.3.

Table 4.3

SL. No	Name of the Scheduled Tribe	Literacy Rate (above 7 + years)		
		Total	Male	Female
1	All Scheduled Tribes	43.4	57.4	29.2
2	Santal	42.2	57.3	27.0
3	Oraon	43.4	55.4	31.0
4	Munda	41.0	54.0	27.7
5	Bhumij	45.6	61.6	29.1
6	Kora	43.4	58.4	28.2
7	Lodha	34.8	46.8	22.5
8	Mahali	41.1	55.6	26.3
9	Bhutia	72.6	80.2	65.2
10	Bedia	48.4	61.7	34.6
11	Savar	26.3	36.4	16.0

Source: Census of India 2001.

Total of 51.7 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes in the age group 5-14 years have been attending any educational institutions. Of the ten major Scheduled Tribes, Bhutia has been recorded the highest 77 per cent and Savar the lowest 35.5 per cent of their respective population attending educational institutions. In West Bengal, merely 8.4 per cent of total literates among Scheduled Tribes are having educational level above matriculation. The Bhutia was 26.1 per cent are well ahead among the major Scheduled Tribes in this regard.⁷

D) Work Participation Rate: In 2001 Census, 48.8 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes population has been recorded as workers, which is close to the aggregated national average for Scheduled Tribes (49.1 per cent). Of the total workers 65.7 has been returned as main workers and 34.3 per cent as marginal workers. Work Participation Rate at 43.7 per cent among females is slightly lower than males (53.8 per cent). Gender disparity, however, is paramount in the category of main workers; 78.3 per cent males and 49.9 per cent females have been returned as main workers. The percentage of female marginal workers is more than twice than that of male.

Distribution of Total, Main & Marginal Workers among the Scheduled Tribes in West Bengal, as per 2001 census, is given in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4

	Total Workers (Percentage to Total Population)	Main Workers (percentage to Total Workers)	Marginal Workers (Percentage to Total Workers)
Total	2,149,255 (48.8%)	1,412,133 (65.7%)	737,122 (34.3%)
Male	1,195,480 (53.8%)	936,302 (78.3%)	259,178 (21.7%)
Female	953,775 (43.7%)	475,831 (49.9%)	477,944 (50.1%)

Source: Census of India 2001.

Among the major Scheduled Tribes, Savars has recorded the highest Work Participation Rate at 53.4 per cent, while it is lowest among Bhutia (36.3 per cent).⁸

E) Category of Workers: Industrial category wise, of the total Scheduled Tribe main workers, 23.7 per cent have been recorded as cultivators and 45.1 per cent as agricultural labourers. The Mahali are ordinarily involved in non-agricultural activities with only 5.3 per cent of their main workers in cultivation and 19.6 per cent as agricultural labourers.⁹

F) Marital Status: The distribution of Scheduled Tribe population by marital status shows that 50.6 per cent is never married, 43.1 per cent currently married, 5.4 per cent widowed, and 0.8 per cent divorced/separated. The Santal has recorded the highest one per cent of their total population as divorced/separated, while it is the lowest among Oraon (0.5 per cent). Percentage of the Scheduled Tribes Population by Marital Status in West Bengal, as per 2001 census, is given in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5

SL. No	Name of the Scheduled Tribe	Never married	Currently married	Widowed	Divorced/Seperated
1	All Scheduled Tribes	50.6	43.1	5.4	0.8
2	Santal	49.9	43.4	5.7	1.0
3	Oraon	54.3	40.4	4.8	0.5
4	Munda	50.9	43.1	5.2	0.7
5	Bhumij	49.3	43.9	6.0	0.7
6	Kora	49.3	43.6	5.8	0.8
7	Lodha	50.3	43.8	5.2	0.7

SL. No	Name of the Scheduled Tribe	Never married	Currently married	Widowed	Divorced/ Separated
8	Mahali	48.2	45.7	5.2	0.9
9	Bhutia	53.6	40.9	4.7	0.8
10	Bedia	49.3	45.4	4.6	0.6
11	Savar	48.0	46.4	4.9	0.8

Source: Census of India 2001.

For all Scheduled Tribes, 2.6 per cent of the female population below 18 years- the minimum legal age for marriage- is ever married. Of the ten major Scheduled Tribes, Savar has recorded the highest 3.5 per cent of their families as ever married, which is well above the state average for Scheduled Tribes. On the other hand among Oraon and Bhutia only 2 per cent of females are ever married below the stipulated age. The ever married males below 21 years- the stipulated age for their marriage- constituted 2.1 per cent of their population. Of the ten major Scheduled Tribes, Mahali have recorded the highest 2.9 per cent married males, while it is the lowest among Bhumij (1.7 per cent).¹⁰

G) Religion: Of the total 4,406,794 Scheduled Tribe population 74.6 per cent are Hindus, followed by 6.1 per cent Christian, 1.8 per cent Buddhists, and merely 0.4 per cent Muslims.¹¹

4.2 Classification of Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal.

The Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal may racially be divided into two broad categories- Proto-Australoid and Mongoloid. The plains area tribals (Santals, Oraons, Mundas, Bhumijas, Koras, Lodhas, Mahalis, Malpaharis, Nagesies etc.) in general possess Proto-Australoid and Mediterranean traits and mainly the North Bengal tribes such as, Lepchas, Bhutias, Rabhas, Meches, etc have Mongoloid physical features and characteristics. Linguistically, the tribals of West Bengal may be grouped into three broad categories. The Santals, Mundas, Hos etc belong to the Austric Speech family; the Oraons and Malpaharies to Dravidian Speech family, and the Lepchas, Bhutias, Meches, Rabhas etc to the Tibeto-Chinese family of Languages.¹²

Table 4.6 Tribal Groups and Linguistic Affinities.

Sl. No	Name of the Tribes	Linguistic Affinities
1	Asur	Austro-Asiatic
2	Baiga	Indo-Aryan
3	Bedia/Bediya	Indo-Aryan
4	Bhumij	Austro-Asiatic
5	Bhutia	Tibeto-Burmese
6	Birhor	Austro-Asiatic

Sl. No	Name of the Tribes	Linguistic Affinities
7	Birjia	Austro-Asiatic
8	Chakma	Indo-Aryan
9	Chero	Indo-Aryan
10	Chik Baraik	Indo-Aryan
11	Garo	Tibeto-Burmese
12	Gond	Dravidian
13	Gorait	Indo-Aryan
14	Hajang	Indo-Aryan
15	Ho	Austro-Asiatic
16	Karmali	Indo-Aryan
17	Kharwar	Austro-Asiatic
18	Khond	Dravidian
19	Kisan	Dravidian
20	Kora	Indo-Aryan
21	Korwa	Indo-Aryan
22	Lepcha	Tibeto-Burmese
23	Lodha/Kheria/Kharia	Austro-Asiatic
24	Lohara/Lohra	Austro-Asiatic
25	Magh	Tibeto-Burmese
26	Mahali	Austro-Asiatic
27	Mahli	Austro-Asiatic
28	Malpahariya	Dravidian
29	Mech	Tibeto-Burmese
30	Mru	Austro-Asiatic
31	Munda	Austro-Asiatic
32	Nagesia	Austro-Asiatic
33	Oraon	Dravidian

Sl. No	Name of the Tribes	Linguistic Affinities
34	Parhaiya	Austro-Asiatic
35	Rabha	Tibeto-Burmese
36	Santal	Austro-Asiatic
37	Sauria Paharia	Dravidian
38	Savar	Austro-Asiatic
39	Subba (Limbu)	Tibeto-Burmese
40	Tamang	Tibeto-Burmese

Source: Census of India 2001.

On the basis of the Linguistic affinities the tribes of West Bengal are categorised into three broad groups, though almost all of them are bilingual or multi-lingual. It is taken paradoxically true that somehow or other the Lodhas, one of the denotified tribes and now designated as a 'Primitive Tribal Group', have been bracketed with the Kherias or Kharias. It may be due to their common claim to be identified as the Savars, a 'fowling or trapping' community, who wanted to have their names enter the epic literature, wherein we find frequent mention of the name of "Savara", a forest dwelling or marginal tribe. Some Hindu influence must have prevailed among them and this has taken deep roots into their mind and culture for sharing the fascinating and dominating Hindu social system. Most of them try to fall back upon the nostalgia of their olden days of living in pleasure-roaming in the jungle, depending on their forest produce and on hunting-gathering economy. Many Anthropologists opines that they have a distinctive socio-cultural life; but the common forest based ecology drew them to some common pursuits and to some sort of apparent alignment.¹³

Santals are said to be a dominating Austric- speaking people and due to their strong political organisation and stable economy from their agricultural gains, they always wear a broad grin on their faces and are not afraid of facing any situations at all times, of day and night. However, changes due to Hindu influence is noticeable among them at times when they are asserted as 'Majhis' when they give up many of their original tribal attributes through Safa hor movement. The Mundas have little affinity with the Santals so far as their language is concerned. But they are more Hinduised, though many of them speak in their own dialect. But their clan organisation and other aspects vary. The Mahalis are nothing but the Santals, as we find may more clan names of the Mahalis are linked with that of the Santals. This may be due to the fact that occupational specialisation involving their bamboo work has separated them from the Santals. They have become 'Mahalis' only following the caste-guide model. Mah means bamboo in Austric language and they specialise in the bamboo work as they crawl in caste bound social system which provide them an occupational and economic security. The associated traits of culture prompted them to accept and ultimately specialize in bamboo work.¹⁴

The term 'Kora' indicates 'small' or 'little'. Possibly, this group originally belonged to the great Hor (Santal) race and had to work as day labourer, without having sufficient agricultural land holdings. This categorised them as Kora which means little or 'small'. In this connection it may be said that most of the terms attributed to these groups of the so-

called tribes are deliberately attributed to them by the stronger brethren and in course of time they had to accept these unhesitatingly, though in many cases they have their own term for ethnic or group identity. The Santals call themselves Hor, meaning 'man', whereas others are called by them as Diku, i.e. alien which possibly is the English root word for 'dacoit'. Prof. S.K.Chatterjee is of the opinion that the terms Santal has been derived from the word Samanta-Pal or the 'border guard' who live in and around the periphery of the Hindu dwelling villages. These people have to accept the term and even in our Constitution they are recognised as Santals and they assert themselves so at times for having retribalisation to merit the advantages of some Constitutional benefits.¹⁵

Some north-eastern tribes also are wrongly identified in different terms and this they are now found to be protesting. These terms were brought in use during the colonial rule due to their lack of understanding. For example, the 'Daflas' now assert themselves as 'Nishi' and 'Mikir' as 'Arleng' etc. The very term 'Kuki' is considered to be derogatory by the so-called Kuki group of people. Nevertheless, we are concerned with the names by which they are identified and listed as 'Scheduled' during the census operations. We are to admit that many of the tribes either by alienation from the main group or forced by alien pressures, had to identify themselves with such names as prevalent then. Though the colonial administrators recorded these facts by collecting data with very little verification, they rather tried to see India with a distinctive outlook segmented vertically as well as horizontally, as the process of gathering and interpreting the facts were possibly done by a kind of monologuing process and thus have become culturally 'isolated' in the greater Indian context. But our Indian ethnographers in most cases are re-interpreting them through dialogues, getting, a very clear image profile of the tribal communities who also contributed potentially to build up Indian civilization. In this case, we have to admit that Constitutional facilities, economic and political gains combinedly have accentuated the idea of distinct identity for such a categorisation.¹⁶

The tribal people, more particularly the Santal, Oraon, Munda, Bhumij, Lodha, Mahali etc have been living in the Western Districts of the State (Midnapur, Bankura, Birbhum, Purulia) adjacent to the Bihar and Orissa states for a pretty long time and these tribal folk in general and the Santals in more particular have a good deal of historical tradition in these districts. On account of growth of collieries in the western part of Bardwan District in the nineteenth century the Santals migrated from Santal Parganas to work as colliery labourers. South-east part of Bardwan District and northern part of Hooghly District were generally affected during the second half of the nineteenth century due to considerable deterioration of hygienic conditions. Round about 1860, these areas became largely depopulated due to the break out of "Bardwan fever" in severe epidemic form. At that time tribals of Midnapur and Bankura districts were encouraged by owners of land to come down and settle in the area. With the improvement of the condition the settlement of the tribals was gradually discontinued. But every year, tribals from Midnapur, Bankura, Birbhum, Purulia, Santal Parganas etc migrated from Bardwan to Hooghly Districts seasonally to work in the agricultural land as labourers. But the intensity of these seasonal migrants also gradually started dwindling due to the improvement of situation in the places of their origin. In the district of 24 Parganas the tribals came down and settled since the beginning of nineteenth century. They were mainly brought over to these areas to clear up the jungle tracts of the Sunderban and to bring the land under cultivation. Tribals in the northern fringe of 24 Parganas, Nadia and Mursidabad were brought a few generations ago to work as labourers in the indigo plantations. Santals of West Dinajpur, Malda and Mursidabad believe that their forefathers migrated to these areas after the Santal rebellion of 1855 which took place in Santal Pargana and Birbhum. After partition

many tribals from East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), who had been taken over to clear up jungle tracts and to work in the indigo plantations, came over to India, and settled in Nadia and a few places in 24 Parganas and West Dinajpur Districts.¹⁷

In North Bengal the history of settlement of the tribals follows a different course unlike the one described above. In Darjeeling District Lepchas and Bhutias are considered to be the earliest inhabitants. There are also a quite large number of Bhutia immigrants from Tibet, Sikkim, and other sub-Himalayan region. Meches and Rabhas are considered to be the earliest inhabitants in Jalpaiguri districts and part of Cooch Bihar district. They migrated to these areas of West Bengal in the historic past from the adjoining districts of Assam. The Garos of this area are considered to have migrated from Mymansingh District of Bangladesh. Tribal communities like Oraons, Mundas, Santals Kherias, Nagerias etc are also found in Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling District where they migrated a few generations ago, as tea garden labourers. It is thus seen that a considerable position of tribal population of the state of West Bengal has migrated from the neighbouring states of Bihar, Orissa, Assam and Sikkim and countries like Tibet, Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh during the last few generations. They cleared up the jungle tracts and made the land cultivable. They constitute a significant portion of the labour force of the State. In North Bengal there are a few tribal groups (Mech, Rabha, Garo) who settled there a long time ago. Though the Mongoloid tribal groups of North Bengal constitute only 3 per cent of the total tribal population of the State and their number is not quite large in comparison to other tribal groups still their importance from various aspects of socio-economic and cultural life of the State cannot be ignored.¹⁸

4.3 The Socio-economic Profiles of Scheduled Tribes of West Bengal.

Economy of a group of people with primitive technology depends on the ecology, environment and adaptational processes which lead to cultural traits. The people have to sustain themselves by exploiting the natural resources. But in some cases, changes of economy are due to various factors- migration to different regions and availability of new employment facilities due to changing situations. In spite of all these, we find that, the Birhors (Bir- jungle and hor- man) who live on the Bengal-Bihar border), i.e in the undulating hills of Purulia, are not agriculturalists. They are gathering- hunting people with their traditionalism. They used to make ropes twisting the bark of some wild trees.

Next to the Birhors, are the Lodas, who also indulge in the same sort of economy of gathering-hunting, specially in the jungle covered areas. Their main concentration is in Midnapur district and in adjoining jungle tracts of Mayurbhanje (Orissa) and some places of Singhbhum (Bihar). These groups have been encapsulated with the region which once provided them with bountiful natural products; hence, the old tradition continues, though we find gradual stages of their transformation while they moved to the eastern tracts of Midnapur. This might be the result of push and pull factors of better living facilities. This Lodha group of people had to bear the stigma of born-criminality. This group is again categorised as one of the major Primitive Group of people. The Kherias or Kharias, who are considered as equals with the Lodhas, as far in West Bengal concerned also live in adjoining regions of Bihar and Orissa where they are more in number. But we find them numerous in the districts of Purulia, Bankura and Midnapur. This Kharia Group, with their jungle based economy, is in the Primitive stage, and lack of communication facilities to the habitats of these people, put them more in suspension. These groups are again bracketed with the Lodhas and, as such, they enjoyed the facilities extended to the Primitive Tribal Groups.¹⁹

The other major Austro-Asiatic language groups of people are dominated by the Santals, who are distributed in almost all the districts, of which Midnapur has the highest concentration. They are basically settled agriculturalists and they subsist on plough cultivation but occasional hunting expeditions are also in practice among them. The Mundas also represent a settled agriculturalists group, but they move in many districts in search of better employment facilities. They are greatly Hinduised, docile and much peaceful people. The Asura groups of people were traditionally iron-smelters, but now a days due to the changing circumstances they engage themselves in agricultural activities. The Kora are also day labourers and agriculturalists. The Mahalis are traditionally basket makers, though some of them take to agriculture in a limited way. The different problems faced by the Mahalis in the context of basket making are as follows:

1. Problems of getting raw materials
2. Fluctuation of demand and problems of marketing
3. Crude method and primitive tools
4. Lack of innovation
5. Resource.

The Oraons are basically Dravidan-speaking people, who mainly depend on plough cultivation. But some of them have accepted the job of sweeping and scavenging work while they live in the urban setting of Calcutta. In the Sundarbans, however, and also in the tea-estates, they are known as good and sincere labourers. The tribes belonging to Tibeto-Burmese language group are the Rabha, Garo, Chamka, Bhutia, Mugh, Mech, Lepcha, Hajang and the Totos. They practice agriculture and many of them are employed in tea gardens. The Totos are very small in number, and prefer to be employed in gardening. They are being employed in the plantations as day labourers in the border regions of Bengal or in the impounded areas at the foot hills surrounded by the mountainous walls and the gorging streams. This group is framed in narrow territory. A few decades ago their numbers gradually dwindled. They also belonged to one of the Primitive Tribal Groups in West Bengal and thus are enjoying the facilities extended to them.²⁰

The Rabhas and Mech mostly concentrated in the Districts of North Bengal particularly in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar Districts of West Bengal. They make beautiful textile objects. The weaving is done by both the sexes, usually by the females in the small primitive loom. But due to the primitive nature of loom, it is always a very time consuming affair. Supply of raw material (cotton thread) is also a problem. It is quite certain that if there is improvement in the loom, if there is regular supply of raw material and arrangements for marketing can be made, then there may be a great prospect of this craft as well.

With regard to the social life of all the tribal groups, there are some basic uniformities. Almost all of them assert themselves to their own traditional names that are known to all. There is little scope for inter-tribe marriages, except in rare cases at the tea estates. All these tribes have clan organisations. The Mundas in the districts in the district of Midnapur show a greater division of the tribes in Bansha (lineage) Patabhai or sub-lineage. There are clans and almost all the clans have their respective totems, which are considered to be the identifying institutions and these clan-brotherhood restrict marriages among themselves. The totemic object is either respected or is regarded taboo for eating or consuming, if it becomes an indispensable element of food item.

All the tribal groups are patriarchate in nature, i.e. agreeing to descent, inheritance, authoritative, residential etc all the time in the male lines, where the matriarchate Garo and the Rabha constitute as a very insignificant tribe in West Bengal. Their concentration is on the north-eastern tract of this country. Strong traditional social and political organisation as once it was binding and controlling force, but due to spread of modern education and involvement of people in modern politics, the political organisation has become weak. But in respect of marriage or other traditional cases of violation, this political organisation appears to tackle the situation properly with an imbibed idea of ethnocentrism. In spite of religiosity, almost all the tribal groups have their traditional deities and spirits, i.e. they have a world of supernaturals which controls the destiny of the people. There are the Supreme god and other deities of minor nature as well as the tutelary village deities in charge of the welfare of the village, either by driving away the evil spirits or by mitigating the supposed wrath of the gods and goddesses.²¹

The Santals strongly believe in witchcrafts which is popularly known as Daini-Vidya. The heartless killing of the witches as per their tradition with the help of the Jan-guru (who can allegedly see through the unseen evil acts by practicing occultism and suggest remedial measures) is very common among them. Even these beliefs are so deep rooted that people cannot think without this. The Lodhas have also a similar concept of Yugini, who is supposed to spread the germ cells of epidemic diseases. Modern education, employment in white-collar jobs and the changing scenario of these people, have some effect on the religiosity of the tribal people. Examples of conversions to other religious faiths are there among many tribals, especially Christianity and thus many tribal people have a changing belief system now.

The members of a Kharia tribe showed in special situations a very limited number of conversions cases to Islam, particularly in Midnapur districts. In spite of all the amazing conglomeration of traditions, beliefs, formal rituals and practices, the tribal people remained as a conceptual model of traditionalism and all these taken together constitute and revitalise this group. This traditionalism has been handed down to them by their ancestors from generation to generation. In order to fight out the disasters and unknown evil forces of supernaturalism, many formalities in the shape of taboos, restricts, prayers, chanting of hymns are in use to placate and pacify the deities all around them, to achieve a secured and undisturbed life and living. All these procedures, according to their tradition, can avert the occurrence of misfortune and bring success and prosperity in their life. Thus, we find worships, sacrifices and other forms of prayer to appease the displeasure of all the angry spirits who are belied to bring about illness, drought, mischance and calamities of various natures. But, in the changing situation, this sort of traditionalism has a very little place and in many places they are to adjust themselves with the changing situation of the world.²²

Tribes in West Bengal show a unique, habitation pattern. Nowhere in this state have had they lived in absolute majority. They mostly live in associations with the other non-tribal population of this state. This shows a very clear picture of interaction with the non-tribes of this state. Tribes in west Bengal are not living in isolation from the non-tribal communities of this state and also there is not a single tribe in this state who is self segregated. Most of the tribal communities of Bengal are maintaining both side by side as well as up and down relations with their so called non-tribal neighbours. In Bengal tribal non-tribal interactions are noticed almost in every sphere of life. The practice of agriculture by most of the Bengal tribes and their pattern of culture has grown out of such an economic activity leading them to form a part of peasantry of this state. There has been a trend among many tribal communities in

Bengal to adopt the rites, rituals and ceremonies of their dominant Hindu neighbours. Sekh Rahim Mondal opines that cultural convergence of the tribals with the non-tribals does not necessarily strengthen the corresponding process in the social context. Moreover, with their cultural convergence the social divergence increases between them. This is due to the fact the social boundaries of the two communities are fixed, defined and rigid in nature. This is more true in case of non-tribes, than in comparison to the tribes.²³

According to S. R. Mondal, exposures to modern education, communication network, market, political process, administration and various induced programmes of socio-economic development and such others helped the tribals to integrate with the greater society. The same set of process has also played a major role to assimilate the tribes leading to total loss of identity. This is relatively true for very smaller tribe of the region. Being exposed to greater society several small tribes have nearly lost their own characteristic identity for example the Bhumij, the Deswali-Majhi etc. Such a process sometimes create problem even for physical survival of the tribes say for example the case of Toto and Mech. Relatively larger tribes like Santal, Munda, Oraon etc being exposed to greater society realized that they are not only losing their culture identity, but also do not find a congenial social environment to observe the system smoothly. This has resulted to review their position and which finally made them identity conscious and that manifested through the process of ethnicity. The process of cultural revivalism or ethnicity sometimes urge for fulfillment of aspirations of the tribal people which lead to the identity shift and thus contributing to the process of fusion or fission. For example, demand for Jharkhand by many tribes of eastern India is an expression of such an emerging socio-political formation.²⁴

The status of women in tribal communities much more dignified. There is no marked preference between a boy and a girl among the tribals. Both are almost equally wanted. The girls and women enjoy considerable amount of freedom in their movement. Women are considered as an economic asset. Her life is spent to work in the field, raising of children, look after the cattle and attending to all the domestic duties Among the tribals women have a very important and economic role to play. Widowhood in tribal community is not severely looked upon. A tribal widow is free to remarry. Also the rate of divorce and separation is very low among the tribals. In case of Hinduised tribes, the values and attitude of the dominant Hindu peasant community seems to have regulated the ascription of women roles. These have usually resulted in a decline of freedom of the women in movement in pre marital friendship, choice of mate, right to divorce and remarry. In some cases, there is even a tendency to replace to the customs of bride-price with bride-groom price. Christianity on the other hand has been a major vehicle of change and modernisation among the tribals of this state. It has opened before them opportunities of educational upliftment and way to achieve new status by performing the diversified roles. It has been observed there is a direct correlation between Christianity and higher literacy among the tribals. This has resulted in awareness, motivation for change, and political consciousness.²⁵

However S.R.Mondal concludes that under present situation due to decrease of physical isolation and increase of socio-economic interaction of the tribals with the non tribals, the former is in the process of integration/ assimilation with the latter. Consequently the tribals constitute the part of peasantry in Bengal. It is true that the tribals are more folk like than that of the non-tribals, but their cultures are by no means unique or fully autonomous. The difference between tribal and non-tribals are going to be minimized day by day. The difference between them is relative rather than the absolute one. Conceptually both belong to

the same socio-cultural continuum, but not at opposite ends of that continuum. Here S.R. Mondal stresses that, through, there has been a sincere effort from the side of the tribes to integrate/assimilate more with the non tribals, yet the latter's response to such a social process is not very enthusiastic. In the economic, political and cultural fronts the tribals come very closer to non-tribals. But this will no way reduce their social and mental distance. Moreover, with this cultural convergence, there has been increase in social divergence. This has made them conscious of their position, which sometimes is expressed through the process of ethnicity. Further, the constitutional safeguards and various other privileges have motivated the tribes to go of retribalisation for the sake of their economic, political social change.²⁶

4.4 Tribal Development in Different Plan Periods in West Bengal.

Problems of the tribal people received special attention after Independence. During the British regime very little attention was given towards welfare and development of this very important section of this country. They were mainly kept aloof from the main currents of national life. However, there were certain administrative measures for safeguarding the interests of the tribal people, then known as "aboriginals". With the attainment of independence the approach of 'Isolation' was discarded and instead of separatist outlook the policy of integration was adopted for ensuring national unity and healthy growth. Thus immediately after Independence, a Special Ministry for Aboriginals and Backward Classes was set up by the Government of West Bengal in January 1949. In 1952, a full fledged Department of Tribal Welfare replaced the Special Ministry to take over the administrations of different welfare measures and to meet constitutional obligations to the different sections of Backward Classes, particularly the Scheduled Tribes. In course of time the activities of the Department increased manifold and the part-time Minister and part-time officers were replaced by a full-fledged Department with a directorate and field officers of its own.²⁷

During pre-plan period the main function of the Ministry for Aboriginals and Backward Classes was to co-ordinate the activities of different departments in relation to the Backward Classes. The responsibility of administration of chapter VII A of the Bengal Tenancy Act was also taken over by the Ministry. It was also the look-out of the Ministry to protect the aboriginals against injustice and exploitation. In addition to the schemes implemented by the special Ministry a few schemes for welfare of the Scheduled Tribes were implemented by various departments out of the normal budget of their own. Five special Officers for Aboriginals were employed for ensuring protection of the tribal people from injustice and exploitation and to render all facilities which the law of the land permitted. They were also to enforce the provisions of Chapter VII A of the Bengal Tenancy Act, so that the poor aboriginals might not have their land snatched away from them by cleverer sections of the people. These Officers also encouraged cultural activities and rendered advice on all matters.²⁸

To enable the tribals to defend their just rights in the courts of Law a scheme for giving free legal aid was in operation since pre-Independence period. During the period 1947-51 an amount of Rs. 9,559 was spent on this account. A sum of Rs.25,000 was sanctioned in 1950-51 and placed at the disposal of Directorate Officers and Divisional Commissioners as special discretionary grants towards and Divisional Commissioners as special discretionary grants towards expenditure on small and urgent projects connected with the welfare of tribals and backward classes, in addition to ordinary discretionary grants. For the advancement of

education among the Tribes, Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, a special Fund known as “Fund for the Promotion of Education among Backward Classes” was set apart providing stipends, building grants, books grants and grants for examination fees, etc to them. In 1948-49, the grant was to tune of Rs. 11,48,000 and in 1949-50 and 1950-51 these were Rs. 11,37,000 and Rs. 11,58,000 respectively. The tribal people received their due share of benefit out of this fund. A college was run at Darjeeling for the Hill Tribes and a hostel for the Bhutias and Lepchas of the same district.²⁹

There was provision for remittance of the court fees chargeable on applications of the tribals under sections 49-F, H, J and M of the Bengal Tenancy Act and also on in the case of lawyers appointed by the Government for the tribals. Court fees had been exempted on applications for special license for home brewing country liquor. An amount of Rs. 4000 in 1949-50 and Rs. 10,000 in 1950-51 were provided to the tribals for special purposes such as payment of court’s decrees and meeting the expenses for the necessities of life. The Government also relaxed the rules for grant of crop-loans to tribals who suffered from restrictions in the matter of mortgaging their lands and could not consequently avail themselves of these loans. One Multipurpose Co-operative Society was established for the Santals at Jhantipahari in the district of Bankura. In 1949 the society did business in controlled goods to the value of Rs. 3, 27,686 and earned a profit of Rs. 17,758. A number of minor irrigation schemes for improvement of backward areas were launched by the Irrigation Department of the Government. A sum of Rs. 1, 63,645 was spent for this purpose up to 1950-51. The following institutions meant for the benefit of the tribal people were running under the Industries Department of the Government.³⁰

- a) The Darjeeling Industrial School and Workshop at an estimated cost of Rs.1, 05,000 per year.
- b) Five Peripatetic Weaving Schools in the district of Bankura, Midnapur, Malda and Birbhum at an annual expenditure of Rs.32,000/-
- c) Three Palm-gur centres in Vishnupur sub division of Bankura District at a cost of Rs. 1,500/-
- d) A Co-operative Wool Weaving Society at Kalimpong. The Department spent Rs. 1,500 annually on the demonstrators.

With the above facts in the background let us examine the significant features and achievements in different plan periods. Under Article 275 (1) of the Constitution, special programmes for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes were launched from 1951-52 and this marks the beginning of the development programmes under First Plan. The administration of the Tribal Welfare activities was placed under the control of a full-fledged Tribal Welfare Department since June 1952. At the beginning of the First Plan period various schemes for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes were implemented by the different departments of the State Government out of their own budget. A separate budget provision was made for the welfare schemes of Scheduled Tribes in 1954-55 and these schemes were included in the State Sector of the Plan as analogous schemes. The expenditure for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes were incurred under the following categories-

- i. Expenditure out of State Plan provision
- ii. Expenditure out of Central grant-in-aid,
- iii. Expenditure out of normal budget of the State Government.

In contrast to the First Plan period the mode of expenditure during the Second Plan Period was as follows:-

- i. State plan- The expenditure for each individual scheme was shared by the Government of India on 50:50 basis,
- ii. Centrally sponsored scheme- the entire cost was borne by Government of India,
- iii. Committed expenditure- the entire cost of those schemes which started during the First Plan Period and continued in Second Plan was met out of the normal budget of the State.

Since the beginning of the first plan the pace of development work has increased manifold as would be evident from the following facts.³¹

During the First Plan Period an amount of Rs. 53.2 lakhs only was spent on specific schemes meant for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes as against Rs. 149 Lakhs during the Second Plan Period which increased to Rs. 231.5 lakhs during the Third Plan Period. Various types of schemes under different sectors such as education, health, agriculture, cooperation, cottage industries miscellaneous etc. were taken up in different Plan Periods for an over-all development of the Scheduled Tribes. Educational schemes were given the first priority amongst the schemes of different sectors in this State. Expenditure during Second Plan in education sector was Rs. 36.5 lakhs which progressively increased to 87.69 lakhs during Third Plan. These figures do not include the amount spent for Post-Secondary Scholarships which was exhibited outside the Plan provision. Apart from free tuition facilities to all tribal students reading in secondary schools, the Government also provided boarding charges, book-grants, stipends etc. in deserving cases. During the First Plan books grants, boarding charges etc were given to 2,312 students, 136 primary schools, 30 basic schools and one M.E. Schools were opened, 18 hostel constructed Whereas during the Second Plan book grants were given to about 7,000 tribal students involving an expenditure of Rs. 1.45 lakhs. The Third Plan provided book grants in 19,000 cases at the cost in Rs 5.7 lakhs. Similarly, as against the provision of Rs.21,000 for giving examination fees to 994 students, the Third Plan provision was for 2,5000 students at a cost of Rs.55,000. Under the Second Plan boarding charges were given to 4,200 students of secondary schools at a total cost of Rs. 5.62 lakhs as against a provision of Rs.22 lakhs during the Third Plan for the same entire purpose. Due to the impact of all these schemes the number of tribal students in the secondary schools increased from 3,500 in the year 1954-55 to 13,700 in 1961-62. The Tribal students were provided with the scholarships in the post secondary stage also. In addition to the schemes of above nature, schemes for upgrading of schools, construction and extension of school hostel were also continued during the Third Plan. During the Third Plan new schemes for providing ashram facilities for tribal students and another for providing coaching facilities to 2000 meritorious students were introduced.³²

The schemes for economic uplift were given second place in order of priority in the plan for welfare of Backward Classes. Under this head scheme in different sectors, e.g., agriculture, irrigation, cottage industries, cooperation etc were taken up. Second Plan expenditure towards economic uplift for the Scheduled Tribes was to the tune of Rs. 35.62 lakhs as against provision of Rs. 77.52 lakhs during Third Plan. During the First Plan period in the field of agriculture Rs. 25,000 worth of fodder, manures, seeds etc., were distributed, 89 demonstrations centers were organised, two poultry farms were opened and 7,740 poultry birds were distributed at subsidized rates, 144 stud bulls were distributed for improvement of

livestock in tribal areas. For irrigational purposes altogether 87 small minor and major irrigation schemes were completed. In the field of cottage industries, five peripatetic weaving schools were started. Training facilities at Vishnupur Industrial school and at Cooch-Behar Industrial School and Workshop were expanded for the benefit of the Tribal people, two Training-cum-production centres for seed lac were opened at Bankura and Murshidabad, two centres for manufacturing of jute and woollen goods were opened at Malda and West Dinajpur, a scheme for development of wool industry was introduced in Darjeeling District. Altogether more than 300 tribal boys were benefited by cottage industry schemes under the First Plan. In the field of Co-operation 30 Co-operative grain golas were opened in order to ensure easy availability of credit in rural areas. Four dairy societies and one co-operative weaving society were also established.³³

During the Second Plan Period, about 10,000 maunds of seeds were distributed at subsidized rates, about 3,000 demonstration plots were opened in cultivators holdings, 40 more stud bulls were distributed, one Poultry Multiplication centre was opened and 15,600 birds were distributed at subsidized rates. Two hundred and six goat-keeping, sheep rearing, pig-rearing blocks, each with one male and 20 female animals were set up. Grants were given to 6,400 families for encouragement of homestead vegetable-cum-fruits gardening. In matters of training, 420 students were given stipends financially for getting in vocational trade and crafts of which 178 students were financially assisted, on completion of their training, to set up business of their own. Besides, six training-cum-production centres in different trades were started and 300 persons were trained. In the field of co-operation, in recognition of the importance of co-operative grain golas, the original target under the second Plan was revised upward to open 117 new grain golas. Arrangements were made for providing credit in cash as well as in grain and the societies were re-designated as grain gola-cum-credit societies. Besides, seven creamery societies were opened to provide subsidiary means of livelihood, 530 families were supplied with improved dhenkis. A scheme for bee-keeping and another one for development of lac cultivation were in tribal areas. Altogether, 1,170 persons were benefitted by these schemes. At Kalimpong, a Wool Industries Centre was set up. Schemes for marketing of paddy and for providing storage facilities to the paddy growers of Sundarban areas were opened. Seventy three Toto families were rehabilitated in the district of Jalpaiguri and a scheme for settlement of 128 land-lease tribals in agricultural colony was taken up. In addition 640 persons were given financial assistance for purchase of agricultural land and houses.³⁴

Apart from the maintenance of the schemes started under the First and Second Plan, the Third Plan provided two training units in bee-keeping, one centre for development of lac cultivation, 130 goat keeping, sheep-rearing, pig-rearing blocks. A provision of Rs. 19 lakhs was also earmarked for small and minor irrigation schemes for the benefit of tribal people. Facilities to 1,250 Scheduled Tribe students in vocational trades and crafts were provided during the Third Plan. Schemes for development of non-mulberry Tasar Industry, training in sericulture, ericulture, spinning etc. were also provided. A provision of Rs. 60,000 was made for providing residential facilities to students receiving training in vocational trades and crafts. Rupees Two Lakhs were provided for giving financial assistance to Scheduled Tribes artisans in selected trades for setting up independent business. For purchases of agricultural land and house sites by landless Scheduled Tribes, Rs. 5 lakhs were provided as assistance. Provision of Rs. 10 Lakhs was also made for reclamation and development of waste land for distribution of such land to landless tribal people and those with uneconomic holdings. The number of multi-purpose co-operative for dispensing credit in cash and kind was further

strengthened by 300 new societies with a provision of 22.20 lakhs. At the end of 1961-62, the total number of grain golas functioning stood at 197. A provision of Rs. 1.50 lakhs was made in the Third Plan for organizing 17 labourers, cooperatives. Provision of Rs 50 thousand also made for providing supervisory cost to industrial co-operatives to be formed by ex-trainees of vocational trades and crafts.³⁶

Apart from these schemes of educational advancement and economic uplift, other miscellaneous schemes covering the different sectors as health, housing, roads, etc were also undertaken for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes. Under the First Plan, 8 beds were reserved in TB Hospitals for tribal patients, 148 dispensaries were given grant for simply supply of costly medicines to poor patients free of charges. Six Health Centres and eleven Leprosy clinics were opened in tribal areas. For removing the scarcity of water supply in tribal areas, 7,700 new sources of water supply were constructed. For opening of communication in the interior tribal areas, 41 miles of roads and 29 small village roads were constructed. For amelioration of the condition of the tribal forests villagers 217 forests villagers, huts were constructed and arrangements were made for supply of drinking water to these huts by providing 68 new sources of water supply. Six welfare centres were started in tribal areas and 12 non-official organisations were given grants for welfare work among the Scheduled Tribes and Castes. Under the Second Plan schemes of general nature were continued. Three hundred sixty five dispensaries were given grant, 30 additional beds were reserved for treatment of tribal T.B. patients, 2158 new sources of drinking water were constructed, and 2,160 tribal families were given grant for construction of houses. Three Leprosy clinics were started and one mobile Dispensary-cum-V.D. unit were opened in North Bengal. Seventy miles roads and about two culverts, bridges and cause way were constructed. Grants were given to forest villagers for construction of 212 huts and for providing 106 water supply sources. Thirty three new welfare centres were opened and non official organisations numbering about 14 were given grants for carrying out welfare works in tribal areas. One hundred and twenty eight Bhutia and Lepcha Monasteries were given grant for preservation and development of their culture. Besides, grants were given to adult education centres, night schools, and exhibition and also for the purpose of other cultural and recreational activities. Rewards and prize were given for outstanding welfare work. The total expenditure on such miscellaneous schemes came to Rs. 134.44 lakhs during the second plan period.³⁶

A provision of 66.24 lakhs was made under the Third Plan for schemes of similar nature. This amount included provision of Rs 20 lakhs for giving grant to about 4,000 families for purchase of house sites and constructions of houses, Rs. 10 lakhs for providing about 1000 sources of water supply in tribal areas. A provision of Rs 5 lakhs was also made for setting up two mobile T.B. Units for preventive and curative purposes and two Health units for curative purposes in unreserved tribal areas. There was also a provision of Rs. 2 Lakhs for giving grant to a few selected non-official organisations for carrying out tribal welfare work. Besides, grants were given to institutions, organisations etc for culture, recreational and social activities. During the Third Plan there was a provision of Rs 3.14 lakhs for the welfare measures of the Denotified Tribes. The measures included scheme of rehabilitation and housing of 100 ex-criminal tribe families. Provision was also for providing Ashram facilities to Denotified tribes in basic schools. Under the scheme three hostels were set up attached to basic schools each IV with accommodation for 20 students.³⁷

After the Third Plan Year Plan there was a recess in the continuity of Five Year Plans during the period 1966-69, when annual plans were in operation. The pattern of schemes was almost

similar during these annual plans as in the case of earlier Five Year Plan Periods, excepting a few variations. An employment oriented scheme known as General Duty Attendants Training Scheme for Tribal girls was introduced during 1966-67. The scheme envisaged setting up of a training Centre in Bankura in cooperation with Medical College and Hospital there, to give training to the selected tribal girls in elementary nursing and other hospital duties so that they could be employed as General Duties attendants, in different hospitals on completion of training. One of the main policies of Government was to distribute the surplus vested land to the Scheduled Tribe persons possessing no or less than two acres of land. With the introduction of the West Bengal Land Reforms Act in which a new chapter (chapter II A) was inserted by way of Amendment in 1965, the old Bengal Tenancy Act stood repealed. All the provisions of chapter VII A of the B. T. Act governing the alienation of Land by tribals was incorporated in the new Act with some additions and changes to the benefit of the tribals. Like land, forests also play an important part in the daily life of the tribals. The sub-committee of the representatives of the Forests, Cooperatives and Tribal Welfare Departments appointed by the Ministers level co-ordination committee in 1965 made some recommendations in the matter of granting certain rights and privileges to tribals in Forests and in information of forests Co-operatives. In addition, during the year (1965) decisions were taken to examine the practicability and feasibility of setting up two residential secondary schools for tribal students in the State with diversified courses. Government orders were also issued for reservation of 5% and 15% of seats for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes respectively in Engineering College and Technical Institutes of the State. The order also provided for relaxation of upper-age limit for seeking admission. Another important decision was to plan for intensive development of tribal packets with ad-hoc assistance from Central Government. The Central Government also long denied to this State any assistance for establishment of Tribal Development Blocks on the ground that the prescribed criteria for the purpose do not obtain in any part of West Bengal. The Department had all along been pressing forward the view point that some special consideration should be shown to West Bengal for the Welfare and development of 2 millions of Scheduled Tribes living in the State. The Central Government finally accepted the justness of the argument and agreed to give full assistance for the implementation of the scheme of the development of the tribal concentrated pockets in lieu of Tribal Developments Blocks. Accordingly, sixteen sub-blocks in nine districts (Malda, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, West Dinajpur, Hoogly, Bankura, Birbhum, Midnapur and Purulia) were taken up during the year. A provision of Rs. 10 lakhs was made in the first year against which a sum of Rs. 8.58 lakhs was spent.³⁸

During the Annual Plan of 1966-67 of the State an amount of Rs.32.87 lakhs was spent for schemes meant for education advancement (23.63 lakhs), economic uplift (6.01 lakhs) and Health, Housing and other schemes(3.23 lakhs). Under centrally sponsored programme an amount of Rs 15.87 lakhs was spent towards schemes under education sector (3.85 lakhs), economic sector (3.37 lakhs) and health, housing and other schemes (8.65 lakhs). Most of the schemes of the Third Plan Period remained in operation during the year barring a few which were discontinued. In this year, about 72% of the total expenditure under the State Plan was made for the educational schemes. Five Primary Schools were constructed at a total cost of Rs 20,000 in scheduled Tribes areas; four new Ashram Hostels were constructed at a cost of Rs. 80,000; the existing Ashram Hostels were maintained at an expenditure of Rs.61,000; tuition fees were provided to 20,394 students (9.90 lakhs), book grants given to 4,262 students (0.83 lakhs); boarding charges were provided to 4,549 students (9.78 lakhs); special stipends were given to 1,163 students (1.08 lakhs) and 0.13 lakhs was spent towards examination fees of 639 students; one new school attached to school was constructed at a cost

of Rs.20,000 and two existing hostel buildings were extended at a cost of Rs 24,000; Rs. 47,000 were spent for reading coaching facilities to students reading in Class IX, X and XI. Under the centrally sponsored programme Rs 92,000 were granted for construction of four schools hostels for Scheduled Tribe girls; major portion of the fund was spent for giving post matric scholarships to 58 students (Rs. 2.94 Lakhs).³⁹

More than 18% of the total expenditure for Scheduled Tribes in the State Sector were spent on the schemes of economic uplift. Financial assistance were provided to 267 Scheduled Tribe families for purchasing of plough cattle, agriculture implements and for reclamation of waste land and expenditure incurred thereon was Rs. 40,000; 92 minor irrigation schemes were executed at a cost of Rs. 3.22 lakhs; 144 families were provided with financial assistance for purchase of house-site and agricultural land at an expenditure of Rs. 33,000, 544 pigs were distributed in 16 selected blocks in the year at a cost of Rs. 37,00; training in vocational trades and crafts were given to 132 Scheduled Tribes at a cost of Rs 28,000 and residential facilities were made available to 102 trainees for which an amount of Rs 12,000 was incurred; financial assistance to the tune of Rs. 28,000 were given to 271 trainees who successfully came out of the Training-cum- Production Centres of the Department for setting up of their trade and also to traditional and trained artisans. Under the Centrally Sponsored Programme, the most important scheme for economic uplift was development of co-operatives. During the year 28 new societies were established at a total cost of Rs. 2.87 lakhs in addition to the 399 established during a preceding years; six labour Co-operatives societies were established during the year at a total cost of Rs. 50,000; 9 Scheduled Tribe Candidates received training in Five Junior Level Co-operatives Training Institutes. In addition sub-Block scheme was run under centrally sponsored programme. During the year Rs. 1.92 lakhs were spent to create 157 new sources of potable water like tube-wells, masonry wells, R.C.C. wells, pipe lines etc in tribal areas; 7 leprosy clinics started during first and second Plan period were maintained so also two mobile units for treatment of V.D. patients and 50 beds reserved for tribal T.B. patients in various hospitals; 168 Scheduled Tribe families given grants for purchase of house-sites and housing materials at a cost of Rs. 50,000. To promote drive for literacy and recreational activities, 68 clubs, libraries and other Institutions of Scheduled Tribes were given grants at a total cost of Rs. 9,000. Seven non-official voluntary agencies were provided grants to the tune of Rs.34,000 for doing welfare work among the Scheduled Tribes. Two Ashram hostels started earlier for the students of the denotified communities were maintained at a cost of Rs. 29,000 out of centrally sponsored schemes.⁴⁰

During 1967-68, an amount of Rs 38.36 lakhs out of State Sector provision and Rs. 12.32 lakhs under central sector were spent towards welfare of Scheduled Tribes. In addition, an amount of Rs.0.20 lakhs was spent for the welfare of the Denotified Tribes. During this year also main stress was given on educational programmes. The Table 4.7 will provide information in details about different schemes during the year 1967-68 together with the expenditure incurred and physical targets achieved.⁴¹

Table 4.7

Sl. No.	Name of the schemes	Expenditure (Rs. In Lakhs)	Achievements/Beneficiaries
A.	EDUCATION		
1.	Payment of Tuition fee	11.19	24,033 students
2.	Book grants to tribal students reading in Secondary Schools	0.94	5,262 students
3.	Coaching arrangements in Secondary Schools	0.31	861 students
4.	Examination fees for students appearing at the S.F. Examination and H.S. Examination	0.16	725 students
5.	Special stipend to poor meritorious students in selected secondary schools.	0.37	454 students
6.	Provision for Ashram facilities in Basic schools	0.46	2 Hostels run and 4 Hostels Buildings constructed.
7.	Extension of existing School hostels.	0.28	2 Hostels extended.
8.	Construction of new hostel buildings	0.50	3 Hostels
9.	Boarding charge for students of Secondary Schools.	13.72	5,464 students
10.	Provision for hostel facilities for students reading in Post-Secondary Institutions in Calcutta	0.12	Preliminaries done but scheme postponed
11.	Grants for construction of Primary Schools.	0.37	8 schools
II.	Centrally Sponsored Programme.		
1.	Scholarship to students reading in Post-secondary Schools.	3.52	696
2.	Construction of hostels for girls students.	0.40	3 Hostels
B.	ECONOMIC UPLIFT		
I.	State Plan.		
1.	Motor Mechanism and Motor Driving	0.07	16 persons
2.	Pig rearing as a subsidiary means of livelihood.	0.05	Old blocks maintained
3.	Minor Irrigation	3.56	45 schemes
4.	Training facilities in vocational trades and crafts.	0.30	127 trainees.

Sl. No.	Name of the schemes	Expenditure (Rs. In Lakhs)	Achievements/Beneficiaries
5.	Development of non-mulberry Tassar Industry.	0.35	125 trainees.
6.	Residential facilities to students receiving training in vocational trades crafts.	0.10	65 students.
7.	Scheme for spinning and weaving.	0.36	17 trainees.
8.	Financial assistance to artisans in selected Trades.	0.20	199 persons.
9.	Provision for purchase of agricultural lands and House sites.	----	
10.	Reclamation & Development of waste land	-----	
11.	Provision of wooden bridges and masonry culverts.	0.05	2 Culverts
12.	Improvement of Kutcha Village Roads.	0.15	2 Roads
13.	Scheme for Training Centre for Carpentry	0.12	13 Trainees.
II Centrally sponsored Programme			
1.	Co-operation (Grain golas, Labourers and forest Co-operatives).	0.52	1 new grain gola and maintenance of 28 grain golas, 2 new Labourers Co-operatives and maintenance of 6 old co-operatives.
2.	Ad-hoc assistance for pocket of tribal concentration (various welfare schemes).	7.20	Water sources 29, primary schools 3, Road-10, Co-operative Society-6, Minor Irrigation 5, Land reclaimed 81.79areas, Housing-48 families, Wooden bridge 4, Community Hall Teachers quarters-2, Settlement in 360 acres of land.
C. HEALTH, HOUSING AND OTHER SCHEMES.			
I. State Plan.			
1.	General Duty attendant training	0.29	30 persons
2.	Aid to voluntary agencies	0.48	10 Organisations
3.	Grants to Institutions and Organisation for Cultural, Recreational and Social activities and the like.	0.15	144 Organisations and Institutions.

Sl. No.	Name of the schemes	Expenditure (Rs. In Lakhs)	Achievements/Beneficiaries
4.	Field staff & and Supervisory staff	3.19	348 Sources
5.	Recreational and Development of waste land and rehabilitation	0.51	Field staff strengthened.
6.	Water Supply.	2.72	135 sources.
II. Centrally Sponsored Programme			
I.	Tribal Research and Training. Welfare Denotified Tribes. Education (Centrally Sponsored Programme).		
1.	Ashram and Hostel facilities to denotified community students in Basic Schools	0.20	1 Hostel, maintenance of two existing Ashram hostels.

Source: Annual Administrative Report for 1967-68, Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

West Bengal with its per capita plan outlay of Rs. 243 during the 18 years (1951-69) occupied 12th position amongst the States in respect of per capita plan outlay. The position of Scheduled Tribe population of this State was certainly much low. The sectoral flow was almost negligible and the Scheduled Tribes mostly depended on the programmes under Backward Classes Sector. During Fourth Plan the expenditure under this sector for the Scheduled Tribe population was Rs. 38,712.13 lakhs, which was 0.32 per cent only. The normal schemes, which were usually executed up to Fourth Plan period for the Welfare of the Scheduled Tribes under Backward Classes Sector were mainly relating to educational grant schemes, schemes for construction of houses for poor and deserving Scheduled Tribes, scheme for supply of potable drinking water, minor irrigation schemes, rehabilitation scheme for the denotified Scheduled Tribes, scheme for giving ad-hoc assistance to pockets of tribal concentration, scheme for constructions of Primary school buildings hostel buildings attached to schools and colleges, roads, bridges and culverts and economic support schemes like establishing grain gola, labourers and forest Co-operative and training-cum-production centres. Some progress was achieved in promoting education in Secondary and post-Secondary stages, in other fields the coverage was extremely poor. Due to lack of any integrated approach whatever benefits that accrued to the tribal people could not be sustained in real terms subsequently. The State of West Bengal could not satisfy the criteria of having 2/3rd or more tribal population, an area of 150-200 squares miles viability to function as an administrative unit and a population of about 25,00 for opening of the tribal development blocks since second Plan period. It was also not possible to carve out any Tribal Development Block even on the basis of reduced criteria of 50 per cent, tribal concentration for the Fourth Plan. Because of dispersed tribal population in the State even the scheme of sub-Blocks on the criteria of

- i. an area of 60-100 sq. Miles
- ii. total population of 10,000;
- iii. tribals concentration of at least 50 per cent could not be operated in this State.

Accordingly, since 1966-67 an ad hoc assistance of Rs. 10 lakhs was approved yearly from the central sector for special schemes in the pockets of tribal concentration where at least 45 per cent of the population must be tribals.⁴²

Under the scheme for giving ad-hoc assistance about 750 villages were covered during from 1966-67 to 1972-73 (Since annual plans for three years to the last year of the Fourth Plan Period) in 14 districts under 62 sub-blocks. In these villages about 61 lakhs were spent on schemes like water supply, housing construction of Primary Schools, Roads, bridges, supply of plough-cattle, land development and minor irrigation schemes, live stock and poultry schemes etc. During this period entire sum of Rs. 61 lakhs was spent with a total tribal population coverage of 2.41 lakhs, which means that on an average a sum of Rs. 3.60 was spent per head annum. Actually, the figure will be less as the benefits had also reached the rest of the population living in the area. This scheme suffered from the lack of continuity and follow-up action, limitations in building up necessary infrastructure for area development and absence of any administrative machinery for supervision. At the end of Fourth Five Year Plan it was felt necessary to review the performances so far achieved through these years. Prior to this, in 1961 a review of Tribal Development was made in the Report of Commission for Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes under the chairmanship of Shri U. N. Dhebar. It was pointed out that many of the evils to which the tribals were subjected were still there. Indebtedness, land alienation, bonded labour system and cunning operation of the money lenders, contractors and traders were playing their roles unchecked. Later on, in 1969 the study Team on Tribal Development Programmes headed by Shilu Ao made similar observations and it was pointed out that the result of planning was not impressive, rather the progress of development was checked in certain areas and perceptible imbalance occurred in between different regions and communities. It was thought that programmes for general development would also automatically help the tribals living in backward areas but it was not so and the same was mainly due to non- appreciation of special problems of the tribals and drawing up suitable programmes to solve the same. An expert committee was setup in 1972 under the chairmanship of Dr. S.C. Dube for advising the formulation of a new, strategy during the Fifth Five Year Plan. The Committee observed "some of the tribal communities have remained completely untouched by the process of development and some have even been adversely affected by it. This cannot be allowed to continue. It is proposed, therefore, to take a fresh look at the tribal situation in the country, review the strategy of development and define the total needed national effort with a view to making tribal communities equal partners in all spheres of national life as early as possible...."⁴³

Although West Bengal had the seventh highest tribal population of the country, the programmes for the welfare and development of tribal people in this state have had little coverage in the earlier Plan Periods as the State could not satisfy most of the criteria of Tribal Development Block approach. In the Fifth Five Year Plan, the Government of India and the Planning Commission envisaged Tribal Sub-Plan approach. The Guidelines for preparation of Sub-Plan and on Preparation of Integrated Tribal Development Project for Tribal Areas elaborated the outline as follows:

- i. All districts with 50 per cent or more tribal population
- ii. All taluks/tehsils/police stations not included in (i) above with more than 50 per cent tribal population and
- iii. All development Blocks not included in (i) and (ii) above having more than 50 per cent tribal population.

There are only three Blocks in Jalpaiguri and Purulia Districts of West Bengal which could come under the purview of the above guidelines. As the majority of the tribal population would be left out under these guidelines, West Bengal adopted a different pattern of identifying mini-micro projects areas, by grouping one or more contiguous C.D. Blocks, having a good number of single-unit or cluster of mouzas with 50 per cent or more Scheduled Tribe population as per 1961 Census. This got the approval of the Planning Commission in 1973 and the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1974. In other words in view of the special tribal demographic situation of the State, the Planning Commission adopted separate approach for demarcating the tribal population and with contiguity in boundaries were considered for constitution of a unit for Integrated Tribal Development Project.(I.T.D.P.) In West Bengal out of the 16 districts, twelve districts (Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum, Midnapore, Hooghly, 24-Panganas, Burdwan, Murshidabad, Malda, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling and West Dinajpore) were selected for this project considering the numerical strength of the population. As per the criteria 33 I.T.D.P. areas (sub-Plan areas) were identified in these 12 Project Districts. Of the total tribal population (25,32,969) of the State as per 1971 Census, 38.80 per cent (9,82,958) resided in these 33 mini-micro areas which were under 114 C.D. Blocks and 98 Police Stations. Total mouzas covered in these I.T.D.P. areas numbers 4,389 with a population of 15,24,487 of whom 64.48 per cent (9,82,958) were tribal people. The area in 12 districts under consideration was 78,963.0 Sq. k.m. out of which 8633.11 k.m. were covered under Tribal Sub- Plan.⁴⁴

On the eve of the Fifth Plan a comprehensive programme of development was prepared, in the first stage of areas of Tribal concentration. Side by side, programme of primitive tribal communities was also given high priority and specific scheme were drawn up for them. It was decided to take up the task of intensive development of dispersed tribal communities at the second phase, during the Sixth Plan Period. The Tribal sub-Plan which represents total development effort in the tribal region comprise the following four elements: i) Investment for State Plans, ii) Investment for Central Plans, iii) Special Central Assistance for Tribal Development and iv) Institutional finance. It was shown in the draft sub-Plan that an investment to the minimum extent of Rs. 158 crores would be necessary for the tribal areas of West Bengal. The State Plan outlays for these areas were worked out as Rs.40 crores. At the instance of the State Planning Board and the Planning Commission the demand for Special Central Assistance were scaled down to 37 crores for additive programmes to the sub-Plan. The balance amount was from Central Ministries' allocation and institutional finance. Financial outlays in different sectoral programmes during Fifth Five Year Plan period under State Plan and Central Assistance Programme is given in Table 4.8:⁴⁵

Table 4.8

	Sector state Plan for Sub-Plan areas	Outlay	Special Central Assistance.	Remarks.
1.	Agriculture	389.00	1,120.00	15% of the expenditure on revisional settlement operation was for tribals and backward areas.
2.	Marketing	70.00	97.70	
3.	Irrigation	1,289.00	500.00	
4.	Land and Land Utilization.	10.82		
5.	Forests	115.00	300.00	
6	Animal Husbandry and Veterinary services	69.80	298.39	
7.	Education	247.96	20.00	

	Sector state Plan for Sub-Plan areas	Outlay	Special Central Assistance.	Remarks.
8.	Health and Public Health	206.00	200.00	
9.	Cottage and Small Scale Industries.	33.00	100.00	
10.	Communication	480.00	320.00	
11.	Cooperation	26.61	200.00	
12.	Social Welfare (Special Nutrition Programme).	86	1.27	
13.	Backward Classes Sector			
a)	Welfare Programmes	179.90	170.75	
b)	Special development programmes for the underdeveloped tribes.	2.50	88.25	
c)	Project Organisation.	----	40.00	
d)	Creation of Propaganda Cell for promotion of temperance.	----	1.00	
		4,050.04	3,666.91	

Source: Source: Annual Administrative Report for 1974-75, Tribal Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

The State Planning Board observed that the maximum emphasis should be given on production oriented schemes to attain viability and for proper integration of all schemes. The Planning Commission also commented that economic development could be based mainly on agriculture and allied activities. Emphasis had been laid on creation of additional employment potential through encouragement of cottage and small scale industries both based on agro and minor forest, as well as by encouraging poultry keeping, duck and goat rearing; and these activities should be supported by training programmes and credit facilities. The strategy to tackle the problems of exploitation of tribal people should receive some package deal from the State Government. In the sub-Plan the main stress has been given on setting up of LAMPS (Large Sized Multipurpose Co-operative Societies), one for each 10,000 population to be located in the most concentrated tribal pockets in the ITDP Areas. These were considered the main instrument in the Project Areas to fight all evils of exploitation and for generating sustained economic growth. These are designed to cater the needs of the tribal people from a single point by arranging marketing of their agricultural, industrial and forest produce, supplying of essential commodities and production inputs, arranging flow of credits, providing credit for consumption and social processes and social purposes, providing credit for redemption of all debts and post-debt relief care. An apex body of the LAMPS, named as West Bengal Tribal Development Co-operation Corporation (WBTDC) pressed into service for coordinating and assisting the working of the LAMPS. The LAMPS are also required to provide the loan component of these agricultural and animal husbandry schemes where granting of graded subsidy has been proposed.⁴⁶

The Agriculture Department indicated their outlays under special State Plan Programme for tribal areas and also other area development programmes like SFDA/MFAL/DPAP etc. Some schemes like training of tribal farmers, restructuring of cropping pattern, construction of small dug-wells, soil conservation schemes etc were also included. Forestry programmes in sub-Plan Areas included afforestation, soil conservation, production of minor forest, mixed plantation on community lands, cultivation of host plants, training etc. The medium Irrigation projects in Tribal sub-Plan Areas were expected to cover 150 thousand hectares at the end of

the Fifth Five Year Plan, average benefits cost ratio being 1.38 to 2.56. The special schemes on animal husbandry included setting up pig farm, goat farm for supply of requisites species of animals at subsidised rate to tribals. There were also cattle and poultry development schemes and some veterinary schemes like establishments of aid centres, clinic van etc. To increase the employment potential in tribal areas training of tribal youths in cottage industries, in animal husbandry and in forestry was included. The scopes for employment of both skilled and unskilled hands were opened up with the increased developmental activities in the areas in Agriculture Sector, Irrigation Sector, Forestry Sector, Road Sector etc. Under Education Sector, to raise the enrolment percentage of tribal children from 58.5 per cent to 71 per cent under general plan expenditure and up to 78 per cent in tribal areas with some additive programmes. There were programmes for better health coverage by suitably integrating programmes under State Plan for opening of health centres, clinics for prevention of V.D., Leprosy and T.B., rural water supply and nutrition programme. There was also provision for certain infrastructural facilities like regulated markets, approach roads to markets, power connection etc. The sub-plan also envisaged undertaking certain socio-cultural programmes like establishments of welfare centres, promotion of tribal art, language and culture, mass communication etc. for the promotion of the quality of their social and cultural life.⁴⁷

Sector-wise breakup of supplemental outlays for tribal development in different Plan Periods reveals substantive portion of money was meant for "Economic uplift" then in order came "Education" and "Health Housing", etc. receiving least consideration up to the end of Fourth Plan. The Table 4.9 will present a clear picture in this respect.⁴⁸

Table 4.9

Sectoral Supplemental Outlays for Tribal Development in West Bengal				
Plan Period	[Rs. In Crores]			
	Education	Economic Uplift	Health Housing	Total
First Plan	5.10	8.46	3.81	17.37
Second Plan	8.05	22.70	9.76	40.51
Third Plan	13.23	30.72	7.10	51.05
1966-69	9.32	24.07	1.93	35.32
Fourth Plan	31.50	42.25	10.45	84.20

In the Fifth Plan period (1974-79) the total plan outlay was Rs. 39.322 crores of which 3.01 per cent was for the Tribal Development Programmes. The detail outlay and expenditure of the Tribal Sub-Plan during 1974-79 is given in the Table 4.10⁴⁹

Table 4.10

Outlays and Expenditure of Tribal Sub-Plan During Fifth Five Year Plan in West Bengal						
[Rs. In Crores]						
Year	State Plan			Special Central Assistance		
	Outlay	Expenditure	% Utilization	Outlay	Expenditure	% Utilization
1974-75	23	25	109	4.03	3.08	72
1975-76	72	60	83	20.00	14.59	73
1976-77	181	154	85	40.00	30.99	77
1977-78	248	223	90	55.00	51.49	94
1978-79	332	290	87	67.00	64.96	97
Total	856	752	88	186.30	165.1	189

Table 4.11 shows that in the Fifth Plan both State Plan and the Special Central Assistance outlay and expenditure increasing yearly but the percentage of utilization is decreasing. Following statement showing Special Central Assistance received from Government of India, outlays, expenditure, for Tribal Sub-Plan in the Sixth Plan, Seventh Plan and Eighth Plan Period.⁵⁰

Table 4.11

Outlays and Expenditure of Tribal Sub-Plan During Sixth Plan Period in West Bengal					
[Rs. In Lakhs]					
Year	Total State Plan Outlay	S.C.A. Received from Govt. of India		Expenditure	
		S.C.P.	T.S.P.	S.C.P.	T.S.P.
1980-81	58,036.41	1002.00	364.58	1043.18	366.16
1981-82	63,850.00	944.00	366.00	943.20	370.89
1982-83	49,910.25	1093.00	421.00	928.76	418.17
1983-84	54,300.75	1170.80	500.00	1224.36	527.46
1984-85	74,800.00	1418.21	524.60	1418.11	531.15
Total	3,50,000.00	5628.01	2176.18	5557.61	2213.83

The Table 4.12 shows State Plan outlays, flow to T.S.P. and expenditure made thereof during Seventh Five Year Plan and onwards.

Table 4.12

Outlays and Expenditure of Tribal Sub-Plan in West Bengal During Seventh Plan Period			
[Rs. In Lakhs]			
Year	Total State Plan Outlay	Flow to Tribal Sub-Plan	Expenditure
1985-86	67,500.00	2492.72 (3.69%)	2423.28
1986-87	77,600.00	2983.96 (3.98%)	2386.546
1987-88	86,200.00	3266.89 (3.79%)	2771.831
1988-89	95,088.90	3652.265 (3.84%)	2971.85
1989-90	1,11,500.00	3785.97 (3.39%)	4571.075

Outlays and Expenditure of Tribal Sub-Plan in West Bengal During Seventh Plan Period			
	[Rs. In Lakhs]		
Year	Total State Plan Outlay	Flow to Tribal Sub-Plan	Expenditure
1990-91	1,32,822.30	5306.40 (3.99%)	6158.65
			(Anticipated)
1991-92	1,48,600.00	6062.56 (4.08%)	

The concept of family oriented schemes or beneficiary oriented schemes have been introduced in tribal development programmes since Sixth Five Year Plan. The main purpose is to raise the Scheduled Tribe families above the poverty line.

Table 4.13

Outlays and Expenditure of Tribal Sub-Plan in West Bengal During Eighth Plan Period			
	[Rs. In Lakhs]		
Year	Total State Plan Outlay	Flow to Tribal Sub-Plan	Percentage
1992-93	1,50,100.00	6,866.90	4.56
1993-94	1,55,000.00	7,533.535	4.86
1994-95	1,70,600.00	6,422.156	3.76
1995-96	2,20,730.00	12,546.00	5.68
1996-97	3,08,094.40	5,485.58	1.78
		(Budgeted)	
Total	10,04,524.40	38,854.171	3.86

Table 4.14

Outlays and Expenditure of Special Component Plan During Eighth Plan in West Bengal		
Year	SCP Released by Govt. of India (Rs. In Lakhs)	TSP Expenditure (Rs. In Lakhs)
1992-93	1,171,67	1,64,33
1993-94	1,319,06	940,37
1994-95	1,335,83	1,335,83
1995-96	1,763,21	1,763,21
1996-97	1,381,42	1,381,42
Total	6,971,19	7,067,16

It was estimated by the Ministry of Home Affairs that an account of Rs. 800 Crores approximately was invested towards family benefiting schemes from the State Plan and Central Assistance during Sixth Plan. Such schemes mainly come under agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, minor irrigation, fishery, cooperation, and small industries. During Sixth Plan 2,28,267 lakhs families were programmed to be assisted during the plan

period. The total family assisted during Sixth Plan may be around 2,77,618 lakhs. The report of the Working Group reveals that, of these families about 10 per cent of the total coverage of tribal families under economic assistance have crossed the poverty line, while the rest were assisted economically to a certain degree. Further it has been seen that majority of tribal families were still left to be economically assisted to cross the poverty line. During Seventh Plan the investment towards this sector had to be substantially increased both in the State Plan and Central Assistance.⁵¹

4.5 West Bengal Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation Ltd [WBTDCC Ltd.] and Large Sized Multipurpose Co-operative Societies (LAMPS).

The tribal people of India could not reap the benefits of independence even after the end of the third Five-year Plan and continued to be poor, downtrodden and illiterate with very little opportunities for improvement and joining the mainstream. In spite of having cultural heritage, they could not attain economic independence. During this time, Government of India initiated 6 pilot projects each at the cost of Rs. 1.5 crores and Rs 0.5 crore for development of roads and infrastructure in four States viz. Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, with considerable density of tribal population. On 03 March 1971 a committee headed by the Joint Secretary, Co-op. Deptt. Sri K.S. Bawa with four other members was constituted by the Agriculture Deptt. Of Government of India to prepare report on the progress of those pilot project areas, especially in organising co-operative movement. The mandate of the committee also included to see whether a special type of organisation can be formed for financial assistance for taking up business and provide marketing opportunities for their various products. The Committee submitted its proposals before the Agriculture Ministry on 24th January 1973.

Depending on the recommendations of the Bawa Committee that the level of exploitation could be brought down if the tribal people themselves could form a joint co-operative structure. Accordingly, formation of Large Sized Multipurpose Co-operative Societies (LAMPS) was conceived as primary co-operative society in the lowest or Block level with an apex co-operative body in the State level which would guide the LAMPS in their day-to-day activities as well as business propositions.⁵²

In 1975, the Tribal Sub-Plan was initiated in the State of West Bengal in which action was taken to form LAMPS with the fund allocated the 5th Five year Plan and under the aegis of the Backward Classes Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal, The West Bengal Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation Ltd. (WBTDCC Ltd.), as the apex body for the LAMPS, was formed and registered on 26th March 1976. However, the W.B.T.D.C.C. Ltd started proper functioning from 1978. Prior to the functioning of WBTDCC Ltd the LAMPS were registered and supervised by the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies of concerned ranges.

The Director, Backward Classes Welfare was appointed ex-officio Additional Registrar of Co-operative Societies, West Bengal by a Notification issued by the Government of West Bengal in the Co-operation Department for the purpose of exercising statutory control over the LAMPS for their proper functioning as well as exercising all powers under the W.B.C.S. Act, 1983, except the powers mentioned in Schedule- I of the said Act and the power of statutory audit. Since the issue of this Notification the registration of LAMPS was done by the Director, Backward Classes Welfare.

Subsequently, the Managing Director of W.B.T.D.C.C. Ltd. was appointed ex-officio Additional Registrar of Co-operative Societies under Notification No. 3353-Co-op./E/2P-1/88 dated 4th August 2004 for the purpose of exercising statutory control over the LAMPS for their proper functioning as well as to assist the Registrar of Co-operative Societies, West Bengal, so far as it is related to the LAMPS. In the said Notification, the Managing Director, W.B.T.D.C.C. Ltd. was empowered to exercise all the powers mentioned in Scheduled-I of the said Act and the power of statutory audit in the capacity of ex-officio Additional Registrar Co-operatives Societies.

With the issue of this Notification the Managing Director, W.B.T.D.C.C. Ltd. started to accord registration of LAMPS as well as exercise all the powers under the WBCS Act, 1983 except the powers mentioned in Schedule-I of the said Act and the power of statutory audit in the capacity of ex-officio Additional Registrar Co-operatives Societies. To start with, LAMPS were organised in the areas of several small grain golas. Thereafter, formation of LAMPS in the I.T.D.P. Mouzas was started.

As per the existing norms, the district level officer entrusted with the implementation of Tribal Sub-Plan, i.e., the Project Officer-cum-District Welfare Officer (P.O.-cum-D.W.O.) acts as the coordinator of the LAMPS in his operational area. The W.B.T.D.C.C. Ltd. after giving registration arranges for granting of Share Capital and margin money to the LAMPS and also operational capital in the form of loan from the State Govt. for upliftment of the socio-economic condition of the tribal people. LAMPS are to provide for their members, the tribal people of the area, the credit required for their agricultural operations, collection of minor forest produce, arrange for marketing of minor forest produce collected by their tribal members and other surplus commodities produced by them at fair prices, for consumption purpose, for implementation of Family Benefit Schemes and also for supply of essential consumer goods required by them.

Organisational set up of LAMPS may be described in three stages as follows: ⁵³

1. General Body
2. Board Of Directors
3. Chief Executive Officer
4. Employees

a) **General Body:** General Body consists of persons, each of whom, joining in an application for registration of a LAMPS or a person admitted to the membership of a LAMPS after registration in accordance with the provisions of the W.B.C.S. Act, the WBCS Rules

and the Bye-laws of the LAMPS made thereunder. In addition, any one of two persons admitted jointly to the membership of LAMPS under sub-section (4) of section-69 shall also form a part of the General Body.

b) Board Of Directors: The Board of the LAMPS is constituted by:

1. Election from amongst members at annual general meeting; under sub section (1) of section 27 of WBCS Act, 1983.

Provided that the number of Directors to be elected shall not be less than six or more than fifteen as may be specified in the bye-laws thereof and the election is held at an Annual General Meeting under rule 31/rule 36 of the WBCS Rules, 1987.

2. Nomination by the State Government when it decides to make such nomination under section 33 of the WBCS Act, 1983;

The State Government or any authority specified by the State Government in this behalf shall have the right to nominate on the Board of LAMPS not more than three members of the Board, whichever is less.

3. Nomination by Panchayat Body under subsection (5) of section 27 (Panchayat Body may nominate one of its members on the Board of LAMPS).

4. The employees of a LAMPS having not less than 5 employees may elect from amongst themselves one person on the Board under sub-section (3) of section 27 of WBCS Act, 1983 where a LAMPS have a Chief Executive paid out of funds of the LAMPS, such Chief Executive shall be a Director on the Board under sub-section(4) of section 27 of WBCS Act, 1983.

1. Any financial institution which finances LAMPS may nominate one person on the Board of such LAMPS under subsection (5A) of section 27 of WBCS Act, 1983.

Provided a Director elected under sub-section 1 or subsection (3) or nominated under subsection (5) or sub-section (5A) shall hold office for a period of 3 years from the date of his election or nomination, as the case may be

Provided further that a Director elected under sub-section (3) or nominated under sub-section (5) shall not be eligible for re-election or re-nomination as the case may be, within a period of 3 years from the date of expiry of his term of office.

The Directors referred to in sub-section (3), subsection (4) and subsection (5) shall not hold any office in the Board.

Provided that the Directors referred to in sub-section (3), sub-section (4) and sub-section (5) shall have no right to vote in any meeting of the Board held for the purpose of election of office bearers of the Board, nor they hold any office in the Board.

Provided further that the Directors referred to in sub-section (3) shall have no right to vote in any meeting of the Board.

c) **Chief Executive Officer:** The Chief Executive Officer holds the most pivotal position in the functioning of a LAMPS. As he is an ex-officio director on the board under sub-section (4) of Section 27 of the WBCS Act, 1983, he takes part in the policy making of the LAMPS. Again as the Chief Executive he implements/ executes the decisions of the board through the available machineries of LAMPS.

d) **Employees:** As per existing pattern of staff/ employees approval by the Government each LAMPS has 4 employees viz.

- i. Field Officer cum Manger
- ii. Night guard-cum-Weigh man
- iii. Accountant
- iv. Salesman.

Present Status of LAMPS in West Bengal: Registration of LAMPS in West Bengal started in the year 1973 with the registration of Belpahari LAMPS Ltd. in the district of Midnapore (now West Midnapore) under the hand and seal of the Assistant Registrar of Co-operative Societies, Midnapore-I. Till the end of 2007-08, 143 LAMPS have been registered in West Bengal. Progressive number of LAMPS as they stood during 5 years are given in Table 4.15 wherefrom the importance given on registration of LAMPS in the successive years to bring the tribal population under the activities of LAMPS can be ascertained.⁵⁴

Table 4.15

Year	Progressive No. of LAMPS
2003-04	122
2004-05	125
2005-06	131
2006-07	133
2007-08	143

Source: Backward Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.16

District wise and region/branch wise distribution of 143 LAMPS with number of members:							
Sl. No.	Name of the District	Name of the Region/Branch	No. of LAMPS	Total No. of S/T Members	Break up of S.T.		Total No. of Members
					Male	Female	
01.	Paschim Midnapore	Jhargram R.O.	21	46,894	30,351	16,543	46,894
02.	Purba Midnapore	Jhargram R.O.	01	1,087	622	465	1,087
03.	Purulia	Purulia R.O.	23	58,332	36,753	21,579	64,600
04.	Bankura	Bankura R.O.	19	43,871	28,248	15,623	43,871
05.	Birbhum	Suri B.O.	12	13,392	8,683	4,709	13,883
06.	Murshidabad	Suri B.O.	03	3,732	2,770	962	4,243
07.	Burdwan	Suri B.O.	07	7,601	4,814	2,787	7,992
08.	Hooghly	Head Office	03	9,700	5,464	4,236	9,746
09.	24 Parganas(North)	-----	02	6,601	3,116	3,485	7,004
10.	24 Parganas(South)	-----	03	1,888	1,306	582	1,888
11.	Malda	Malda	10	15,990	9,450	6,540	17,216
12.	Uttar Dinajpur	Malda	03	8,945	5,205	3,740	11,296
13.	Dakshin Dinajpur	Malda	16	37,345	19,726	17,619	37,720
14.	Jalpaiguri	Jalpaiguri	16	29,944	18,488	11,456	33,731
15.	Darjeeling	Jalpaiguri	04	5,079	3,062	2,017	5,092
	Total		143	2,90,401	1,78,058	1,12,343	33,06,263

Source: Backward Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

Name of S.T. Communities covered by LAMPS membership: In all the 143 LAMPS spreading over the 15 districts of the State the membership of LAMPS has been acquired by the S.T. people belonging to 40 communities. Some of these communities are:

1. Bhumij
2. Bhutia
3. Birhor
4. Kora
5. Kharia
6. Lepcha
7. Lodha
8. Lohara/ Lohra
9. Mahali
10. Malpaharia
11. Mech
12. Munda
13. Oraon
14. Rabha
15. Santal
16. Savar

17. Sherpa

18. Toto

Income Generating Scheme: To revitalise economic activities of the LAMPS, the Corporation provides medium term loan through different schemes under Income Generating Head. The year-wise detail is as follows:⁵⁵

Table 4.17 Financial Year 2003-2004

Sl. No.	Name of the LAMPS	Name of the Region	Name of the Scheme	Sanctioned Amount (Rs.)
01.	Kharagpur BI-I	Jhargram	Broiler	1,49,740.00
02.	Negui	Jhargram	Babui Rope	1,14,750.00
03.	Manbazar BI-II	Purulia	Grocery Shop	1,00,000.00
04.	Rajnagar	Suri	Sisal Plantation	2,41,000.00

Source: Backward Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.18 Financial Year 2004-2005

Sl. No.	Name of the LAMPS	Name of the Region	Name of the Scheme	Sanctioned Amount (Rs.)
01.	Sidhu Kanu Birsha (Para)	Purulia	Clean Credit	2,00,000.00
02.	Hura Thana	Purulia	Fertilizer Business	1,00,000.00
03.	Bandwan South	Purulia	Clean Credit	15,00,000.00
04.	Adibasi Fulkusuma	Bankura	Piggery	90,000.00

Source: Backward Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.19 Financial Year 2005-2006

Sl. No.	Name of the LAMPS	Name of the Region	Name of the Scheme	Sanctioned Amount (Rs.)
01.	Baradighi	Jalpaiguri	Goatery	1,00,000.00
02.	Tilokghagra	Jhargram	Broiler	1,71,780.00
03.	Raipur Sobar	Bankura	Sal Plate Making	1,00,000.00
04.	D.R.M.S.	Bankura	Sal Plate Making	1,00,000.00
05.	D.R.M.S.	Bankura	Fertilizer Business	1,00,000.00
06.	Habibpur	Malda	Fertilizer Business	1,50,000.00
07.	Bansihari	Malda	Corogated Tin Business	1,50,000.00
08.	Kushmandi	Malda	Corogated Tin Business	1,50,000.00
09.	Udayan	Malda	Consumer Business	1,50,000.00
10.	Jalghar	Malda	Hardware Business	1,50,000.00
11.	Belpahari	Jhargram	Clean Credit Loan	4,00,000.00
12.	Nazirpur	Malda	Fertilizer Business	1,50,000.00
13.	Hili	Malda	Hardware Business	1,50,000.00

Sl. No.	Name of the LAMPS	Name of the Region	Name of the Scheme	Sanctioned Amount (Rs.)
14.	Gangarampur	Malda	Corigated Tin Business	1,50,000.00
15.	Kamarpara	Malda	Consumer Business	1,50,000.00
16.	Sandesskhali	Head Office	Piggery	1,20,000.00
17.	Bandwan South	Purulia	Clean Credit Loan	5,00,000.00
18.	Karandighi	Malda	Hardware Business	1,50,000.00

Source: Backward Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.20 Financial Year 2006-2007

Sl. No.	Name of the LAMPS	Name of the Region	Name of the Scheme	Sanctioned Amount (Rs.)
01.	Kumarganj	Malda	Grocery Shop	1,20,000.00
02.	Belpahari	Jhargran	Clean Credit Loan	3,00,000.00
03.	Haroa Minakha	Head Office	Broiler	1,50,000.00
04.	Laskarhat	Malda	Consumer Business	1,50,000.00

Source: Backward Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.21 Financial Year 2007-2008

Sl. No.	Name of the LAMPS	Name of the Region	Name of the Scheme	Sanctioned Amount (Rs.)
01.	Ausgram BI II	Suri	Bakery Unit	3,83,000.00
02.	Chattadianmari	Jhargram	Fertliser	2,00,000.00
03.	Durgapur	Suri	Clean Credit	3,50,000.00
04.	Totopara	Jalpaiguri	Bettle Nut	5,00,000.00

Source: Backward Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal.

4.6 Tribal Development and the role played by Panchayats for tribal development in West Bengal.

Local self-government means autonomy and autonomy designates and simplifies local government. There is a direct correlation and powerful link between localism and self-government. The great bulk of activities of self-government or so to say local government are closely associated with providing services to the common people living in close proximity, who are not able to provide these services for themselves individually. Local self-government essentially emphasizes a certain geographical area, local election or selection and a measure of autonomy including the power of taxation. It is an effective and convenient way to provide services as locally elected institutions are better placed to understand and interpret both the conditions and needs of local communities. There is equality as people have broader opportunities for participation in the policy-making and liberty in mitigating the power of a single power unit in terms of division of powers. Therefore liberty and equality promote participation and efficiency on the parts of the local people and local government. The

essential ingredient of a satisfactory democracy is that a considerable proportion of local people should have experience of active participation in local government institutions.

Panchayat is an institution which is capable of performing an important role in mobilizing the rural people in the development process. As a local level institution operating at the micro-level it shares state power. It is government for the local area. It manifests local will and local interest as distinct from the will of the state at the higher level. It allows space for participation of the people in its affairs within a very small area. As a local institution people find it easier to participate in it. By allowing the people to participate in it, to express local will through extensive participation the Panchayats have the capacity to close the gap between state and society.

West Bengal has a long tradition of rural local self-government institutions. During the British era, Chowkidari Panchayats were set up in 1870 in-groups of villages mainly for maintenance of law and order. Soon thereafter, on commencement of the Bengal Local Self-government Act, 1885 a system of local self-government was introduced; District Board at district level, Local Board at Sub-division and Union Committees at the level of a group of villages. A Royal Commission on Decentralisation (1907-1909) recommended a little more autonomy for the local self-government institutions and the Bengal Village Self-government Act, 1919 was passed which achieved the fusion of Chowkidari Union and Union Committee in the newly created body Union Board at the village level which lasted till 1950s.

The Balwantray Mehta Committee was appointed in 1957 by the National Development Council to suggest measures for better working of Community Development Programme and National Extension Services. The Committee recommended democratic decentralisation to a three-tier Panchayat system based on universal adult suffrage to ensure people's participation in development programmes and genuine transfer of power, responsibility and resources to Panchayati Raj Institutions. On the basis of these recommendations, the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1957 was passed setting up a two-tier Panchayat system at the village level and at the union level. The West Bengal Zilla Parishads Act, 1963 further introduced two tiers at the Block level and district level thus providing for four-tier structure consisting of Zilla Parishad, Anchalik Parishad, Anchal Panchayat and Gram Panchayat in the State. For various reasons the system did not work after some time and these bodies were superseded in late sixties.

A further initiative was taken to frame a consolidated piece of legislation namely the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 which paved the way for introducing a three tier system with Zilla Parishad at the district level, Panchayati Samiti at the block level and the Gram Panchayat at the anchal (cluster of villages) level. The Act came into force on 1st January, 1974 in the whole of West Bengal except coalfield areas in the district of Burdwan, Bankura and Purulia and Tea Gardens, Cinchona Plantations and Reserve Forests. The first Panchayat election was held under the Act in June 1978 and since then Panchayat general election have been held in 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2003 and 2008 strictly observing the five

year period Elections have been held with open participation of political parties through universal adult franchise.

Twenty six amendments to the Act have been made till date. The Act was extended to the tea Gardens, Cinchona Plantation and Forest areas of this State at the time of 5th Panchayat General Election held in 1998. The State went ahead of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 by institutionalizing village assembly i.e. Gram Sabha and reserving one-third seats for women and proportional seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in 1992. The West Bengal State Election Commission was constituted in 1994 and since then it has been conducting elections to the rural and urban Local Self-governments.

In 1988 a major amendment was made in the Act to mark the grant of limited autonomy to Darjeeling Hill Areas with the formation of Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council and Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad came into being with all the powers and authority of the Zilla Parishad for Siliguri Sub-division. At present the State has 18 Zilla Parishads including 1 Mahukuma Parishad, 341 Panchayat Samitis (including 8 Panchayat Samitis in the hill areas of Darjeeling district) and 3354 Gram Panchayats (including 112 Gram Panchayats in the hill areas of Darjeeling district). Election to 8 Panchayats Samitis and 112 Gram Panchayats in the hill areas of Darjeeling is lying overdue). In the table 4.22 shows the districtwise number of block/ Panchayat Samitis and number of Gram Panchayats in each districts of West Bengal.

Table 4.22

District wise Block and Gram Panchayats			
SL No.	District	No. of Blocks/ Panchayat Samiti	No of Gram Panchayats
1.	Bankura	22	190
2.	Birbhum	19	167
3.	Burdwan	31	277
4.	Coochbehar	12	128
5.	Dakshin Dinajpur	8	65
6.	Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council	8	112
7.	Hooghly	18	210
8.	Howrah	14	157
9.	Jalpaiguri	13	146

District wise Block and Gram Panchayats			
SL No.	District	No. of Blocks/ Panchayat Samiti	No of Gram Panchayats
10.	Malda	15	146
11.	Murshidabad	26	254
12.	Nadia	17	187
13.	North 24 Paraganas	22	200
14.	Paschim Medinipur	29	290
15.	Purba Medinipur	25	223
16.	Purulia	20	170
17.	Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad	4	22
18.	South 24 Paraganas	29	312
19.	Uttar Dinajpur	9	98
	TOTAL	341	3354

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Now, the question is to what extent the tribal people of West Bengal have been empowered. It has two aspects- tribal representation in Panchayati Raj institutions and actual participation of the tribal people in elections and party politics. With regard to the former mention here may be made that the statutory provisions for reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have provided them opportunities to become formal leaders of the village. New social factors, such as urbanisation and industrialisation and the agencies of political socialisation, such as political parties have aroused class-consciousness among the backward classes. The Tables 4.23, 4.24, 4.25, and 4.26 gives an insight towards the representation of the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in the General Panchayat Election of 2003 in the three tiers of Panchayats in West Bengal.

Table 4.23: Information on Panchayati Raj Institutions and Panchayat members including SC, ST, Women in W.B. after General Panchayat Elections, 2003.

Name of District	No. of Gram Sansad	No. of Gram Panchayat	No. of Seats/ Members in GP	No. of Panchayat Samiti	No. of Seats/ Members in PS	No. of Seats/Members in ZP/MP
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Coochbehar	1703	128	1905	12	339	26
Jalpaiguri	2075	146	2241	13	374	31
Darjeeling	1043	112	1597	x	x	x
Siliguri	359	22	405	04	64	07
D.Dinajpur	929	65	993	08	179	15
U.Dinajpur	1422	98	1529	09	263	21
Malda	2008	146	2232	15	388	33
Murshidabad	3635	254	4096	26	697	60
Birbhum	2096	167	2258	19	412	35
Burdwan	3857	277	4346	31	734	65
Bankura	2548	190	2632	22	478	41
Purulia	1911	170	2067	20	384	34
Paschim Medinipur	3491	290	4073	29	733	62
Purba Medinipur	2975	223	3480	25	604	52
Hooghly	3029	210	3440	18	577	47
Howrah	2245	157	2515	14	426	34
Nadia	2653	187	3114	17	512	41
N.24 Parganas	2942	200	3321	22	555	50
S.24 Parganas	4324	312	4898	29	845	66
Total:	45,245	3354	51,142	333	8,564	720

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.24: Information on Directly Elected SC, ST Male & Female Members of Gram Panchayat

Name of District	Male Members				Female Members			
	SC	ST	GEN	Total	SC	ST	GEN	Total
Coochbehar	710	05	513	1228	386	01	290	677
Jalpaiguri	638	315	468	1421	360	177	283	820
Darjeeling	73	110	843	1026	43	76	452	571
Siliguri	154	99	11	264	52	41	48	141
D. Dinajpur	215	115	300	630	122	87	154	363
U. Dinajpur	334	55	555	944	226	43	316	585
Malda	285	93	985	1363	192	54	623	869
Murshidabad	329	28	2293	2650	224	16	1206	1446
Birbhum	510	121	783	1414	287	70	487	844
Burdwan	849	192	1763	2804	531	118	893	1542
Bankura	540	212	838	1590	393	146	503	1042
Purulia	232	258	838	1328	163	172	404	739
Paschim Medinipur	430	430	1651	2511	341	321	900	1562
Purba Medinipur	318	04	1918	2240	183	07	1050	1240
Hooghly	592	98	1532	2222	369	66	783	1218
Howrah	286	01	1344	1631	202	X	682	884
Nadia	652	52	1310	2014	376	27	697	1100
N. 24 Parganas	689	85	1318	2092	431	54	744	1229
S. 24 Parganas	1115	45	1889	3049	776	20	1053	1849
Total:	8951	2318	21,152	32,421	5657	1496	11,568	18,721

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.25: Information on Directly Elected SC, ST Male & Female Members of Panchayat Samiti.

Name of District	Male Members				Female Members			
	SC	ST	GEN	Total	SC	ST	GEN	Total
Coochbehar	136	01	86	223	65	X	51	116
Jalpaiguri	115	70	57	242	57	28	47	132
Darjeeling	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Siliguri	23	15	04	42	07	07	08	22
D. Dinajpur	40	18	49	107	26	17	29	72
U. Dinajpur	60	09	98	167	37	08	51	96
Malda	48	12	192	252	25	12	99	136
Murshidabad	52	05	402	459	38	01	199	238
Birbhum	86	23	153	262	52	11	87	150
Burdwan	146	36	299	481	88	18	147	253
Bankura	105	31	160	296	59	26	97	182
Purulia	42	51	158	251	30	28	75	133
Paschim Medinipur	86	88	290	464	55	43	171	269
Purba Medinipur	51	01	344	396	34	01	173	208
Hooghly	100	22	258	380	63	07	127	197
Howrah	52	X	230	282	28	X	116	144
Nadia	100	07	234	341	58	06	107	171
N. 24 Parganas	123	15	210	348	76	08	123	207
S. 24 Parganas	180	05	354	539	125	07	174	306
Total:	1545	409	3578	5532	923	228	1881	3032

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.26: Information on Directly Elected SC, ST Male & Female Members of Zilla Parishad

Name of District	Male Members				Female Members			
	SC	ST	GEN	Total	SC	ST	GEN	Total
Coochbehar	04	X	13	17	05	X	04	09
Jalpaiguri	07	06	07	20	05	02	04	11
Darjeeling	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Siliguri	01	X	03	04	01	01	01	03
D. Dinajpur	03	02	05	10	02	01	02	05
U. Dinajpur	05	01	09	15	02	X	04	06
Malda	04	01	17	22	02	01	08	11
Murshidabad	05	01	34	40	03	X	17	20
Birbhum	07	02	14	23	04	01	07	12
Burdwan	15	02	26	43	06	03	13	22
Bankura	09	03	15	27	04	02	08	14
Purulia	04	05	13	22	03	02	07	12
Paschim Medinipur	07	07	27	41	04	03	14	21
Purba Medinipur	05	X	29	34	03	X	15	18
Hooghly	10	X	20	30	03	02	12	17
Howrah	04	X	18	22	03	X	09	12
Nadia	09	X	18	27	04	01	09	14
N. 24 Parganas	10	01	22	33	05	01	11	17
S. 24 Parganas	18	X	26	44	07	01	14	22
Total:	127	31	316	474	66	21	159	246

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

The Tables 4.23, 4.24, 4.25, 4.26 shows that in the General Panchayat Election of 2003 the total number of elected Scheduled Tribes males members are 2318 and Scheduled Tribe females members are 1496 of Gram Panchayats, The total number of elected Scheduled Tribes males are 409 members and scheduled tribe females are 228 members of Panchayat Samitis and the total number of Scheduled Tribe males are 31 members and Scheduled Tribe females are 21 members in Zilla Parishad. As compared to the number of elected Scheduled Caste representatives, the number of elected Scheduled Tribes representatives was lower in all the tiers of panchayats, the reason behind this may be due to the fact that the population of Scheduled Tribes are lower in proportion than the population of the Scheduled Castes.

Table 4.27: Information on No. of Panchayats and Elected Representatives in the Village Panchayats in States/UTs as on 31.03.2008.

Sl. No.	States/UT	No. of Panchayats	Village Panchayats: No of Elected Representatives								
			General (Non-SC/ST) Categories		SC		ST		OBC	Total	Women
	States :			No.	%	No.	%	No.		No.	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	21825	160386	31243	15.00	16662	8.0		208291	68736	33.0
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1639	0	0	0.00	6485	100.0		6485	2561	39.5
3	Assam	2223	20862	1254	5.48	782	3.4		22898	8977	39.2
4	Bihar	8471	99672	16941	14.43	784	0.7		117397	64152	54.6
5	Chhattisgarh	9820	74498	17200	10.94	65552	41.7		157250	53045	33.7
6	Goa	189	1328	0	0.00	181	12.0		1509	514	34.1
7	Gujarat	13819	80349	7615	6.97	21245	19.5		109209	36400	33.3
8	Haryana	6187	52268	14320	21.51	0	0.0		66588	24406	36.7
9	Himachal Pradesh	3243	15383	6095	26.90	1176	5.2		22654	8864	39.1
10	Jharkhand	3746	0	0		0			0	0	
11	Karnataka	5628	64525	16997	18.60	9880	10.8		91402	39318	43.0
12	Kerala	999	14181	1750	10.84	208	1.3		16139	5705	35.3
13	Madhya Pradesh	23051	226873	57752	14.85	104204	26.8		388829	133508	34.3
14	Maharashtra	27893	172370	24624	11.00	26863	12.0		223857	74620	33.3
15	Manipur	165	1599	37	2.21	39	2.3		1675	730	43.6
16	Orissa	6234	48396	14805	17.34	22166	26.0		85367	31121	36.5
17	Punjab	12443	60692	27440	31.14	0	0.0		88132	30875	35.0
18	Rajasthan	9188	21403	24140	21.23	20248	17.8	47846	113713	40044	35.2
19	Sikkim	163	440	52	5.84	399	44.8		891	356	40.0
20	Tamil Nadu	12618	86325	22156	20.27	827	0.8		109308	36824	33.7
21	Tripura	513	3633	1408	26.31	291	5.4		5352	1852	34.6
22	Uttar Pradesh	52000	527779	174842	24.86	673	0.1		703294	273229	38.8
23	Uttarakhand	7227	41717	10413	19.29	1858	3.4		53988	20319	37.6
24	West Bengal	3354	31425	14492	29.25	3628	7.3		49545	18150	36.6
	Union Territories										
25	A & N Islands	67	759	0	0.00	0	0.0	0	759	261	34.4
26	Chandigarh	17	135	27	16.67	0	0.0		162	53	32.7
27	D & N Haveli	11	6	3	2.63	105	92.1		114	45	39.5
28	Daman & Diu	14	64	1	1.30	12	15.6		77	30	39.0
29	Lakshadweep	10	3	-	-	82	96.5		85	32	37.6
30	Puducherry	98	695	218	23.88	0	0.0		913	330	36.1
	TOTAL	232855	1807786	485825	18.36	304350	11.5028		2645883	975057	36.85

Source: Compiled from data provided by the States and Union Territories.

Note: General (Non-SC/ST) categories, Males & Females;

SC: Scheduled Caste Males & Females

ST: Scheduled Tribe Males & Females;

Women: Combined SC, ST and General categories.

Table 4.28: Information on No. of Panchayats and Elected Representatives in the Intermediate Panchayats/ Panchayat Samitis in States/UTs as on 31.03.2008.

Sl. No.	States/UT	No. of Panchayats	Intermediate Panchayats: No of Elected Representatives									
			General (Non-SC/ST) Categories		SC		ST		OBC	Total	Women	
	States :			No.	%	No.	%	No.		No.	%	
1	Andhra Pradesh	1098	10938	2586	17.69	1093	7.48			14617	4919	33.65
2	Arunachal Pradesh	136	0	0	0	1639	100			1639	577	35.20
3	Assam	188	1982	80	3.724	86	4			2148	791	36.82
4	Bihar	531	9139	2307	20	91	0.79			11537	5671	49.15
5	Chhattisgarh	146	1404	316	10.61	1257	12.2			2977	1005	33.76
6	Goa	0	0	0		0	0			0		
7	Gujarat	224	3049	297	7.138	815	19.6			4161	1394	33.50
8	Haryana	119	2216	617	21.78	0	0			2833	962	33.96
9	Himachal Pradesh	75	1155	416	24.82	105	6.26			1676	596	35.56
10	Jharkhand	211	0	0		0				0	0	
11	Karnataka	176	2658	678	18.41	347	9.42			3683	1519	41.24
12	Kerala	152	1775	212	10.58	17	0.85			2004	694	34.63
13	Madhya Pradesh	313	3833	1105	16.13	1913	27.9			6851	2378	34.71
14	Maharashtra	351	3022	430	10.96	470	12			3922	1307	33.32
15	Manipur	0	0	0		0				0	0	
16	Orissa	314	3449	1056	16.94	1728	27.7			6233	2208	35.42
17	Punjab	141	1782	840	32.04	0				2622	866	33.03
18	Rajasthan	237	1253	1098	10.99	1025	18.7	2118		5494	2108	38.37
19	Sikkim	0	0	0		0				0	0	
20	Tamil Nadu	385	5119	1358	20.82	47	0.72			6524	2313	35.45
21	Tripura	23	206	78	26.09	15	5.02			299	106	35.45
22	Uttar Pradesh	820	49164	16453	25.05	52	0.08			65660	24674	37.57
23	Uttarakhand	95	2451	596	18.91	105	3.33			3152	1079	34.23
24	West Bengal	341	5540	2422	28.28	601	7.02			8563	2953	34.49
Union Territories												
25	A & N Islands	7	67	0	0	0	0			67	25	37.31
26	Chandigarh	1	11	4	26.67	0	0			15	6	40.00
27	D & N Haveli	0	0	0		0				0		
28	Daman & Diu	0	0	0		0				0		
29	Lakshadweep	0	0	0		0				0		
30	Puduchery	10	89	19	17.59	0	0			108	40	37.04
TOTAL		6094	110213	32968	21.03	11406	7.27	2023		156794	58191	37.11

Source: Compiled from data provided by the States and Union Territories.

Note: General (Non-SC/ST) categories, Males & Females;

SC: Scheduled Caste Males & Females

ST: Scheduled Tribe Males & Females;

Women: Combined SC, ST and General categories.

Table 4.27: Information on No. of Panchayats and Elected Representatives in the District Panchayats/ Zilla Parishad in States/UTs as on 31.03.2008.

Sl. No.	States/UT	No. of Panchayats	District Panchayats: No of Elected Representatives								
			General (Non-SC/ST) Categories		SC		ST		OBC	Total	Women
	States :			No.	%	No.	%	No.		No.	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	22	812	196	17.9	87	7.95		1095	364	33.24
2	Arunachal Pradesh	14	0	0	0	136	100.00		136	45	33.09
3	Assam	20	362	10	2.56	18	4.62		390	135	34.62
4	Bihar	38	956	192	16.6	9	0.78		1157	577	49.87
5	Chhattisgarh	16	160	37	11.5	124	38.63		321	109	33.96
6	Goa	2	50	0	0	0	0.00		50	20	40
7	Gujarat	25	584	58	7.1	175	21.42		817	274	33.54
8	Haryana	19	302	82	21.4	0	0.00		384	135	35.16
9	Himachal Pradesh	12	168	64	25.5	19	7.57		251	92	36.65
10	Jharkhand	22	0	0		0			0	0	
11	Karnataka	29	737	184	18.3	84	8.36		1005	373	37.11
12	Kerala	14	300	35	10.3	4	1.18		339	119	35.1
13	Madhya Pradesh	48	450	153	18.3	233	27.87		836	310	37.08
14	Maharashtra	33	1482	215	11	264	13.46		1961	654	33.35
15	Manipur	4	57	2	3.28	2	3.28		61	28	45.9
16	Orissa	30	488	146	17.1	220	25.76		854	301	35.25
17	Punjab	20	140	69	33	-			209	68	32.54
18	Rajasthan	32	260	194	18.7	193	18.56	393	1040	391	37.6
19	Sikkim	95	43	5	5.26	47	49.47		95	38	40
20	Tamil Nadu	28	514	139	21.2	3			656	227	34.6
21	Tripura	4	55	23	28	4	4.88		82	28	34.15
22	Uttar Pradesh	70	2041	655	24.3	2	0.07		2698	1122	41.59
23	Uttarakhand	13	282	68	18.9		10		360	119	33.06
24	West Bengal	18	469	198	27.5	53	7.36		720	248	34.44
	Union Territories										
25	A & N Islands	1	30	0	0	0	0.00		30	10	33.33
26	Chandigarh	1	7	3	30	0	0.00		10	3	30
27	D & N Haveli	1	1	0	0	10	90.91		11	4	36.36
28	Daman & Diu	1	17	1	5	2	10.00		20	7	35
29	Lakshadweep	1	1	-		24	96.00		25	9	36
30	Puducherry										
	TOTAL	633	10768	2729	17.5	1723	11.04	393	15613	5810	37.21

Source: Compiled from data provided by the States and Union Territories.

Note: General (Non-SC/ST) categories, Males & Females;

SC: Scheduled Caste Males & Females

ST: Scheduled Tribe Males & Females;

Women: Combined SC, ST and General categories.

Table 4.30: Information on No. of Panchayats and Elected Representatives in the Panchayat at all levels in States/UTs as on 31.03.2008.

Sl. No.	States/UT	No. of Panchayats	Panchayats at all levels: No of Elected Representatives								
			General (Non-SC/ST) Categories		SC		ST		OBC	Total	Women
	States :			No.	%	No.	%	No.		No.	%
1	Andhra Pradesh	22945	172136	34025	15.19	17342	7.97		224003	74019	33.04
2	Arunachal Pradesh	1789	0	0	0	8260	100.00		8260	3183	38.54
3	Assam	2431	23206	1344	5.284	886	3.48		25436	9903	38.93
4	Bihar	9040	109767	19440	14.94	884	0.68		130091	70400	54.12
5	Chhattisgarh	9982	76062	17553	10.93	66933	41.69		160548	54159	33.73
6	Goa	191	1378	0	0	181	11.61		1559	534	34.25
7	Gujarat	14068	83982	7970	6.98	22235	19.47		114187	38068	33.34
8	Haryana	6325	54786	15019	21.52	0	0.00		69805	25503	36.53
9	Himachal Pradesh	3330	16706	6575	26.75	1300	5.29		24581	9552	38.86
10	Jharkhand	3979	0	0		0			0	0	
11	Karnataka	5833	67920	17859	18.59	10311	10.73		96090	41210	42.89
12	Kerala	1165	16256	1997	10.81	229	1.24		18482	6518	35.27
13	Madhya Pradesh	23412	231246	59106	14.91	106350	26.82		396516	136196	34.35
14	Maharashtra	28277	176874	25269	11	27597	12.01		229740	76581	33.33
15	Manipur	169	1656	39	2.247	41	2.36		1736	758	43.66
16	Orissa	6578	52333	16007	17.31	24114	26.08		92454	33630	36.37
17	Punjab	12604	62614	28349	31.17	0	0.00		90963	31809	34.97
18	Rajasthan	9457	22296	25432	21.15	21466	17.85	50357	120247	42543	35.38
19	Sikkim	258	483	57	5.781	446	45.23		986	394	39.96
20	Tamil Nadu	13031	91958	23653	20.31	877	0.75		116488	39364	33.79
21	Tripura	540	3914	1509	26.32	310	5.41		5733	1986	34.64
22	Uttar Pradesh	52890	578984	191950	24.87	727	0.09		771661	299025	38.75
23	Uttarakhand	7335	44450	11077	19.26	1973	3.43		57500	21517	37.42
24	West Bengal	3713	37434	17112	29.09	4282	7.28		58828	21351	36.29
	Union Territories										
25	A & N Islands	75	856	0	0	0	0.00		856	296	34.58
26	Chandigarh	19	133	34	18.18	0	0.00		187	62	33.16
27	D & N Haveli	12	7	3	2.4	115	92.00		125	49	39.2
28	Daman & Diu	15	81	2	2.062	14	14.43		97	37	38.14
29	Lakshadweep	11	4	0	0	106	96.36		110	41	37.27
30	Puducherry	108	784	237	23.21	0	0.00		1021	370	36.24
	TOTAL	239582	1928326	521618	18.51	317479	11.26	50357	2818290	1039058	36.87

Source: Compiled from data provided by the States and Union Territories.

Note: General (Non-SC/ST) categories, Males & Females;

SC: Scheduled Caste Males & Females

ST: Scheduled Tribes Males & Females;

Women: Combined SC, ST and General categories.

The Tables 4.27, 4.28, 4.29 and 4.30 shows that the village panchayats of all the States and Union Territories in India totals up to 232855 and the representation of Scheduled Tribes total up to 304350 members. States like Arunachal Pradesh (100.0%), Sikkim (44.8%), Chhattisgarh (41.7%), Madhya Pradesh (26.8%), and Orissa (26.0%) have higher percentage

of representation of Scheduled Tribe members compared to the other states. The Table 4.31 shows the number of Scheduled Tribe elected representatives of Gram Panchayats in West Bengal is 3628 i.e. 7.32%.

Table 4.31

No. of Elected Representatives of Gram Panchayats in West Bengal as on 31.03.2008.					
	Gen.	SC	ST	Women	Total
Total No.	31,425	14,492	3628	18150	49,545
Percentage	63.42	29.25	7.32	36.63	

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

The Intermediate Panchayats / Panchayat Samitis of all the States and Union Territories in India totals up to 6094 and the representation of Scheduled Tribes totals up to 11406 members. States like Arunachal Pradesh (100.0%), Chhattisgarh (42.2%), Madhya Pradesh (27.9%), and Orissa (27.7%) and Rajasthan (18.7%) have higher percentage of representation of Scheduled Tribe members compared to the other states. The Table 4.32 shows the number of Scheduled Tribe elected representatives of Panchayat Samitis in West Bengal is 601 i.e. 7.02%.

Table 4.32

No. of Elected Representatives of Panchayat Samitis in West Bengal as on 31.03.2008.					
	Gen.	SC	ST	Women	Total
Total No.	5540	2422	601	2953	8563
Percentage	64.69	28.28	7.02	34.48	

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

The District Panchayats / Zilla of all the States and Union Territories in India totals up to 633 and the representation of Scheduled Tribes total up to 1723 members. States like Arunachal Pradesh (100.0%), Sikkim (49.47%), Chhattisgarh (38.63%), Madhya Pradesh (27.87%), and Orissa (25.76%) have higher percentage of representation of Scheduled Tribe members compared to the other states. The Table 4.33 shows the number of Scheduled Tribe elected representatives of Zilla Parishad in West Bengal is 53 i.e. 7.36%.

Table 4.32

No. of Elected Representatives of Zilla Parishad in West Bengal as on 31.03.2008.					
	Gen.	SC	ST	Women	Total
Total No.	469	198	53	248	720
Percentage	65.13	27.50	7.36	34.44	

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Table 4.34: Percentage of Various Deprived Sections in Panchayat Representatives of West Bengal (All Level) after 2008 panchayat elections.

Categories	Percentage
Women	39.18
Scheduled Caste (SC)	35.76
Scheduled Tribe (ST)	8.47
Other Backward Classes (OBC)	5.70
Muslims	23.17

Source: Information on West Bengal Panchayats, Their Members and Functionaries, 2010, Panchayat and Rural Development Department, Government of West Bengal.

From the Table 4.34 it is clear that women hold around 40% of the total seats at all levels of panchayats in West Bengal while the Scheduled Castes have around 36% seats and the Scheduled Tribes have around 9%. If we compare the above statistics with the statistics before the 2008 panchayat elections then we observe that the percentage of representation of Women members (at all the tiers of panchayats prior 2008 panchayat election) was 36% , while the percentage of representation of Scheduled Caste members 29% and the percentage of representation of Scheduled Tribe members was 7%. So the above statistics show that there was an increase in representation of all these deprived sections. This is a remarkable achievement and only shows the extent to which the deprived sections in the state are active participants in the decision-making process in the state.

West Bengal introduced the Panchayati Raj system and empowered them in the late 1970s, much before the enactment of the Constitution amendment bill. A large number of schemes are being executed through the panchayats in the rural areas in the State for alleviation of economic and non-economic poverty, providing social security to the poor and also for the development of infrastructure in rural areas. Panchayats contributed to the growth process of the rural economy directly by implementing schemes for improvement of the rural

infrastructure and by providing various services. The Panchayati system has gained importance in rural development in general and tribal development in particular. Panchayats are primarily seen as agencies for development. Panchayats played important role in improving connectivity, developing social forestry, improving small irrigation systems, providing water supply and sanitation facilities, executing schemes on universalisation of education and health system improvement. In addition, there are schemes for providing additional inputs in respect of optimum utilization and conservation of natural resources and for the development of the regions, which are comparatively less developed. Some of the welfare schemes executed by the panchayats essential for rural development and tribal development are discussed briefly below.

A) The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme:

The National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) provides statutory guarantee under the provisions of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) for 100 days of employment in every year to the adult members of any rural household willing to do unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage. For this purpose hundreds and thousands of public works schemes like construction of roads, excavation of canals, improvement of lands, digging of ponds, social forestry are being designed and executed in thousands of villages. The landless agricultural labourers are being given job cards that entitle them to get job or financial compensation if job cannot be given. The three-tier panchayat system has been put in charge of executing this huge programme. Without the involvement of panchayats, it would have been impossible for the national government or any state government to undertake such a gigantic task. The scheme was launched nationally in 200 districts of the country with effect from 2nd February, 2006. From 1.4.2008, the scheme is operational in all the districts of the State. With the guarantee of demand-driven fund allocation, this scheme opens up tremendous possibilities of creating a livelihood resource base of the rural poor.⁵⁹

Operational guidelines for the implementation of the programme have the following important features:

- I. Every willing household is to be registered on the basis of application in the prescribed format. The application should be submitted to the concerned Gram Panchayats (GP).
- II. Every registered household will be given a job card by the Gram Panchayat.
- III. Job cardholders are to be provided with work within 15 days of demand, failing which they will be entitled to unemployment allowance subject to certain conditions prescribed under the programme.

Job cardholders are provided wages for unskilled labourer. In West Bengal the wage rate was raised to Rs. 81 per person-day from 1st January, 2009. The entire amount is being paid through accounts opened in banks and post offices.

The Employment Guarantee (EG) scheme is a Centrally Sponsored Scheme on a cost-sharing basis between Centre and the State.

A. The Central Government meets the cost of the following:

- I. The amount required for payment of wages for unskilled manual work under the programme.
- II. Up to three-fourth of the material cost of the programme, including payment of wages to skilled and semi-skilled workers.

- III. Administrative expenses which include the salary and allowances of the Programme Officers and their supporting staff.
- B. The State Government meets the cost of the following:
- I. The cost of unemployment allowance payable under the programme.
 - II. One-fourth of the material cost under the programme including payment of wages to the skilled and semi-skilled workers.
 - III. The administrative expenses of the State Council.

The programme differs from other schemes in respect of the following:

- a) The programme gives legal guarantee for 100 days' employment in a financial year on demand,
- b) It provides for unemployment allowance on the failure to provide employment within 15 days of demand for employment,
- c) Other schemes like SGRY are allocation-based, with EG programme is demand driven.

By the end of the financial year 2008-09, 95,56,067 job cards were issued. Among them, 30.47 lakhs households demanded employment during the year and 30.23 lakhs households were provided wage employment. Up to October, 2009-10, 99.98 lakhs job cards were issued and among them 28.96 lakhs households demanded employment. On an average 72.17 per cent of the households got registered during the year 2008-09 and 786.62 lakhs person days of employment were generated.

Table 4.35

Registration, Demand for Employment and Average Number of Person-days Generated on the Basis of Employment Provided per Household under NREGA during 2008-09

Name of the District	Number of households who got registered (in lakhs)	Percentage of rural household got registered	Number of household demanded employment (in lakhs)	Number of persons-days generated per household
Jalpaiguri	5.90	87.63	2.22	25
Uttar Dinajpur	4.36	88.96	0.57	24
Dakshin Dinajpur	2.47	67.57	0.70	25
Malda	5.38	81.24	0.98	17
Murshidabad	8.97	77.55	1.84	21
South 24-Parganas	7.40	59.80	1.35	19
Paschim Medinipur	7.40	73.69	3.20	27
Bankura	4.91	82.11	2.05	28
Purulia	4.13	82.23	1.24	31

Registration, Demand for Employment and Average Number of Person-days Generated on the Basis of Employment Provided per Household under NREGA during 2008-09

Name of the District	Number of households who got registered (in lakhs)	Percentage of rural household got registered	Number of household demanded employment (in lakhs)	Number of persons-days generated per household
Birbhum	6.37	97.43	1.86	38
Coochbehar	5.19	86.73	2.29	15
DGHC	0.89	70.27	0.40	26
Nadia	6.55	75.97	1.16	30
North 24-Parganas	5.37	51.22	1.69	42
Siliguri MP	0.72	65.99	0.29	20
Hoohgly	4.60	56.34	1.49	20
Purba Medinapur	5.86	69.14	2.67	16
Burdwan	8.48	76.26	4.12	34
Howrah	1.72	32.38	0.36	9
Total	96.66	72.17	30.47	26*

*= State average.

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

As shown in the Table 4.35, the number of person days of work provided per household (by those households who demanded work) was 26 days on an average in 2008-09 as compared to 25 days in previous year. The districts which provided more than 30 days of employment per household during the year were North 24-Parganas, Purulia, Birbhum and Nadia. North 24-Parganas district provided highest number of 42 days of employment on an average, which is comparable to national average of 44 days. The performance of Malda, South 24-Parganas, Coochbehar and Purba Medinapur was very poor, where on an average only 16 days of employment were provided to each household. Till October 2009, only 6438 number of households got 100 days employment. Bankura and Jalpaiguri districts provided largest number households with full 100 days employment. Participation of women in NREGA works has improved in most of the districts of West Bengal. Person-days generated by the women were 29.14 per cent of total person-days generated during 2009-10, up to October, when the desired norm is that at least one third of the beneficiaries will be women. The share of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe population in getting under NREGA was around 51 percent.

During 2008-09, an amount of Rs. 940.38 crore was spent, out of which Rs. 615.22 crore was spent on payment of wages only. Up to October, 2009-10 an amount of Rs.809.40 was utilized out of which Rs.578.96 has been spent on payment of wages. In 2008-09 wage earned per person-day has been Rs.78 only. Cost of generating one person-day was Rs.119.54 as compared to Rs.100.86 in the previous year. This rise is due to revision of wage rate and taking up of construction of more durable assets involving high material cost. Major problem of implementation of NREGA is inordinate delay in receiving adequate fund to meet the demand. In areas with low demand for work, fund had to be retained for taking up new project, whereas other areas with high demand suffered due to inadequate fund. Last year fund had to be diverted from one district to other. Performance under NREGA during 2008-09 as compared to 2007-08 is shown in the Table 4.36:

Table 4.36

Indicators	2007-08	2008-09
Total person-days created (lakhs)	959.77	786.62
Man-days generated per family	25	26
Average wage earned per day (Rs.)	75.62	78.21
Cost of generating one person day (Rs.)	100.86	119.54
Expenditure (Rs. In crore)	967.98	940.38
Expenditure per GP (Rs. in lakhs)	29.60	26.86

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Little availability of land and high cropping intensity make it difficult to provide employment, particularly, during the rainy season. Demand for employment has been more in the agriculturally backward areas. Planning for NREGA at the community level gives more emphasis on improving connectivity, developing social forestry and improving small irrigation systems. Providing all weather roads connectivity to all the habitations and soil and water conservation have been important priorities. Thus, under NREGA assets are being created along with the creation of gainful employment in the State. Year wise creations of assets through NREGA under some broad heads are shown in the Table 4.37:

Table 4.37

Creation of assets under NREGA				
Type of scheme	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10 (up to Oct.09)
Water conservation and water harvesting (lakhs cu.m.)	103.06	532.10	114.59	191.88
Drought Proofing (hect.)	6373.02	13799.38	15944.50	4115.83
Micro irrigation work (k.m.)	1351.64	4295.83	8119.26	2313.15
Irrigation on individual land (Hect.)	540.33	2005.75	15501.20	708.67
Renovation of traditional water bodies (lakh cu.m.)	77.60	195.27	145.66	110.03
Land development	2717.91	6570.32	28343.60	3199.19

Creation of assets under NREGA				
Type of scheme	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10 (up to Oct.09)
(Hect.)				
Flood control and protection (k.m.)	2039.83	4168.78	8582.07	2922.69
Road connectivity (k.m.)	11371.5	27680.40	17183.55	11344.18

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Training of personnel associated with the programme and strengthening the administrative machinery for implementation are major components of West Bengal's NREG programme. Large scale training have been organised for the officials at the district, block, gram panchayat levels as well as for the elected functionaries for proper understanding of various provisions of the act. Training of Gram Unnayan Samiti members was also organised for more community ownership and support. Several posts have been created at all levels to strengthen the government machinery and emphasis was laid upon conducting social audits for improving transparency. One of the major aspects of NREG programme in the State is to introduce institutional mode of payment. People registered under the programme should open an account in bank or in post office. Till October, 2009 76.56 lakhs accounts have been opened in banks and post offices. The implementing agencies will credit the amount in respective accounts.

B) The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana:

The Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana (SGSY) aims at alleviating rural poverty by facilitating creation of self-employment opportunities for the poor. Organising the poor, particularly the poor women, in self-help groups (SHGs) has been given priority under this scheme. The primary objectives of the groups are to mobilize savings of the individual members, to ensure availability of need-based financial services to them and to take up income-generating activities. When the groups seek to undertake economic activities, SGSY assistance is provided to them in the form of bank credit and subsidy. The scheme also envisages creation of an enabling environment for the groups to function effectively through such activities like capacity building of the group members, linking the groups with the banks, facilitating marketing of their products or services, etc. The SHGs are also encouraged to participate in various development activities. Individuals living below the poverty line can also be assisted under SGSY, but the major thrust of the scheme is on development of the groups. The scheme is implemented in the districts by District Rural Development Cells (DRDC) of the Zilla Parishads.⁶⁰

According to the guidelines of SGSY, after the formation of a group, the members would rely on their own savings, with the government providing training and infrastructural support. After around six months, the SHGs are graded first by the banks and government officials for judging the eligibility for providing access to bank credit. Those found eligible are allowed to open cash credit account in a bank, part of which is contributed by the government and do not bear any interest. In order to increase the credit limit, the DRDC places a revolving fund in the account. The credit limit set by the bank is determined by the quantum of the revolving fund and the group's own saving. The money in the cash credit account can be withdrawn for consumption or for taking up micro enterprises. The SHGs, which pass the first grading, become eligible for scheme based lending after being graded for the second time. Only Grade

I groups with six months' experience are supposed to be graded for the second time. Table 4.38 shows that number of SHGs has increased from 58,708 in the year 2002-03 to 2,76,152 up to October 2009. Till 2008-09, out of 2.57 lakhs groups, 2.13 lakhs groups were formed by women. This indicates that this form of organisation is highly acceptable to the poor women. Progress was achieved not only in the formation of groups, group saving increased by about eighteen times from 13.47 crore to Rs. 238.98 crore in the period between 2002-03 and 2008-09. During the same period fourteen fold increase took place in drawing of cash credit from Rs. 28.28 crore to Rs. 414.94 crore. This fund has been extensively utilized for undertaking various income generating activities.

Table 4.38

Performance and Progress of SHGs under SGSY							
Year	No. of SHGs formed since inception	Savings (Rs. in crore)	No. of SHGs passed Grade-I (cumulative)	No. of SHGs passed Grade-II under project based lending (year-wise)	No. of SHGs having access to cash credit account (cumulative)	Cash credit drawn (Rs. in crore)	No. of SHGs who took up economic activities and received credit and subsidy
2002-03	58708	13.47	27129	2004	14648	28.28	462
2003-04	78985	28.99	40357	2532	24460	45.00	1177
2004-05	113943	32.46	63674	7182	36193	62.12	1861
2005-06	149896	69.67	95106	6595	77223	139.70	1514
2006-07	186486	117.95	137226	9826	104208	220.88	2513
2007-08	223909	199.92	169940	11132	136792	319.88	3167
2008-09	257307	238.98	199098	15294	167059	414.94	4403
2009-10 (up to Oct' 09)	276152	274.61	-----	5640	183425	-----	-----

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

A major problem in implementation of SGSY is inadequate banking infrastructure and poor delivery of credit related services. Around 938 Gram Panchayats, out of a total of 3354 Gram Panchayats, do not have banks within their geographical areas. Out of these 938 Gram Panchayats 246 Gram Panchayats having identified as having no bank branches within a radius of about 15 kilometer and 265 number of Gram Panchayats have no branches within a radius of 10 km., while the remaining Gram Panchayats have no banking facility within a radius of 5 km. Even where they exist, their performance with regard to delivery of credit related services has not been satisfactory. Taking up grading exercises, timely, has been a chronic problem. Delay also occurs in opening cash credit accounts by the banks even after the groups passed Grade-I. Till March, 2009 as many as 1.25 lakhs SHGs were waiting for being taken up for their first grading. Delay also takes place in sanctioning micro-enterprise project proposals submitted by Grade-II passed groups.

The second column of the Table 4.39 indicates the number of groups capable of undertaking projects in larger scale is still very small. Also the Credit-Subsidy ratio is poor and has declined from 1.95 in 2002-03 to 1.61 in 2009-10 (up to Oct.2009). Accordingly, progress in respect of absorption of project-linked credit and subsidy has not been satisfactory. Year-wise status of project based lending is shown in the Table 4.39.

Table 4.39

Year-wise Status of Credit Linkage through Project Based Lending					
Year	No. of groups linked to projects	Amount disbursed (Rs. in lakhs)			Credit-Subsidy Ratio
		Credit	Subsidy	Total	
2002-03	462	4105.6	2108.5	6214.1	1.95
2003-04	1177	3516.2	2116.9	5633.1	1.66
2004-05	1861	3339.0	2278.8	5617.8	1.47
2005-06	1514	2252.4	1615.0	3867.4	1.39
2006-07	2513	3161.1	2254.2	5415.3	1.40
2007-08	3167	4310.6	2733.8	7044.4	1.58
2008-09	4403	6192.9	3959.8	10152.7	1.56
2009-10 (Up to October' 09)	1814	2667.9	1658.7	4326.6	1.61

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Most of the SGSY groups have been formed by women belonging to the families below the poverty line. It is natural that they take more time to absorb project-linked credit. The State Government also does not encourage imposing loan burden on the SHG's unless they acquire the skill and self-confidence to absorb the credit. However, the number of groups undertaking small-scale economic activities by utilizing the advances from their cash credit accounts is increasing. Many among them have acquired the skill and confidence to take up activities involving higher amounts of investments. Efforts are being made to identify them and provide them with project-based credit and other support. Production and supply of goods and services required for running various projects of the government like ICDS, housekeeping jobs at health centres, providing catering services to government and panchayats offices are being explored for expanding business opportunities to SHGs.

The State Government has taken various steps towards the training and nurturing of groups major component of West Bengal's SGSY programme. For developing self-management capacities of the groups, training of group members is being taken up in large scale in all the districts. More emphasis is being given on improving capacities of the groups for being able to take up economic activities through better understanding of banking operations, taking up suitable productive ventures and marketing their products. In order to accomplish this task resource persons are being marketing their products. In order to accomplish this task resource persons are being identified, trained and engaged both at the district level and the block and Gram Panchayat levels. For those groups who want to take up productive activities in farm or non-farm sectors, including service sector, specialised skill training is organised. The DRDCs

(District Rural Development Cells) have been arranging such skill training in collaboration with various line departments, NGOs and others. Even such specialised institutions like the National Institute of Fashion Technology, Apparel Design and Training Centre and the Institute of Catering Technology have been commissioned to impart skill training. Banks are being asked for opening up Rural Development and Self Employment Training Institutes (RUDSETI). Till now four such institutes were opened at Behrampur in Murshidabad, Howrah, Buruipur in 24-Parganas (S) and Debra in Paschim Medinapur.

The importance given on training under SGSY programme will be evident from the fact that during 2008-09, 24.39 per cent of total expenditure of SGSY was spent on training. Expenditure on training as a percentage of total expenditure was 22.31 in 2007-08 and 19.4 per cent in 2006-07 and 14.5 per cent in 2005-06. In 2008-09, as many as 94,941 Swarojgaris were trained. Around 28.88 per cent of them belonged to the minority community, 24.52 per cent belonged to Scheduled Castes and 5.76 per cent belonged to Scheduled Tribes. Training of Swarojgaris have been intensified further during the year 2009-10 and till October, 2009 2.69 lakhs SHG members have been trained on various skill improvement including better financial management. The State Government tries to provide non-credit inputs to the SHGs so that they can take up income generating schemes. For instance, Grade-I passed SHGs have been made eligible to obtain lease of government fisheries. Tanks excavated under different employment generation schemes are also given on lease to SHGs. The panchayats give land to SHGs for raising nurseries. Inputs for agriculture like seeds, fertilizers have also been given to SHGs for carrying out cultivation of crops. Other inputs like chicks, piglets, and fingerlings have been provided to SHGs for taking up income generating activities in animal husbandry and fishery sectors. In a few districts, like Burdwan, Uttar Dinajpur, etc. many SHGs have taken up dehusking of paddy in an organised way for supplying rice to Food Corporation of India (FCI).

In order to intensify activities relating to training and nurturing of groups and monitoring of their performance, gram panchayats are involved. This will facilitate participation of SHGs in various other development activities. The State Government's ultimate objective is to federate the SHGs formed under different programmes within a gram panchayat in one or more clusters known as Sanghas. The Sanghas are to be federated at the block level. The block level federation has been named as Mahasangha. Till March 2009, 10,451 Upasanghas, 1220 Sanghas has been formed. Earlier more than one Sangha had been formed in a Gram Panchayat. The present policy is to have one Sangha at the level of a Gram Panchayat and one Upasangha at the Gram Sansad level. 16 Block Level federations have also been formed under a special project. There is also a plan to develop credit cooperative society at the Mahasangha level for promoting on-lending to the member-groups. Two Mahila Credit Co-operative Societies have been formed in Dinjata-1 and Tamluk blocks. Two block federations: Amta-I and Amta-II started Micro Finance Institutions (MFI) operations since March 2009. Initiatives have been taken in order to start MFI operations in another six number of block federations.

The State Government has set up a new department 'Department of Self Help Group and Self Employment' with the objective inter alia, to promote the activities of SHGs and also to coordinate the activities of SHGs formed by different agencies like government departments, NGOs and banks. Marketing of the products produced by SHGs is a major problem. It is for this reason that SHGs are advised to produce primary products and other products that can be sold in the village or in its vicinity. There are, however, many SHGs who manufacture products, such as handicrafts, that have market mainly in the urban areas. With the support of the State Government, many of such SHGs participated in local, state and national level fairs to sell their products. As Table 4.40 shows, total sale of products of SHGs in different fairs during 2008-09 amounted to Rs.1638.72 lakhs compared to total sale of Rs.997.28 lakhs in 2007-08.

Table 4.40

Sale of SHGs Products in Fairs during 2008-09	
Name of Fair/ Mela	Sale (Rs. in lakhs)
Eleven Regional SARAS including IITF	161.80
Fair at Dashinapan	38.63
Vidyasagar Mela	3.19
Banga Sanskriti Mela & Fair at IIM	1.20
Hastashilpa Mela	6.38
Handicrafts Expo '08	7.43
Permanent outlet (SARAS Gallery)	22.50
Outlets in different districts and local sale	1312.35
Local fairs in different districts	85.24
Total	1638.72

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

C) Indira Awas Yojana:

As per the report of Rural Household Survey conducted in 2005 out of 113.9 lakhs households 5.78 lakhs (4.3 per cent) households were houseless and another 57.3 lakhs (42.7 per cent) households lived in kuchha houses. Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) is a rural housing project for the poor. It seeks to assist the homeless living below the poverty line to construct their own houses or upgrade their dilapidated houses. The cost of IAY is shared by the Central and State Government in the ratio of 75:25. The Central and State shares are released in two instalments each year directly to the districts. The allocation of fund under IAY is done on the basis of SC/ST population and housing shortage. The allotment of a house under IAY is generally done in the name of the female member of the household or in the joint name of husband and wife. The unit cost for new construction during 2009-10 is Rs.35,000 in plain areas and Rs.37,500 in hill and difficult areas. The unit cost covers the cost of sanitary latrine and smokeless chullah also. The unit cost of up gradation is Rs. 12,500. Up to 20 per cent of the total fund under IAY is to be utilised for upgradation of houses.⁶¹

Under IAY at least 60 percent of the total beneficiaries have to be Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribe families living below the poverty line. Beneficiaries are selected in the meetings

of Gram Sansads and the final lists of beneficiaries are prepared by the Gram Panchayats out of the beneficiaries selected by Gram Sansads. The list of selected beneficiaries has to be displayed prominently by the Gram Panchayats for information of the general public. In order to make the operation of the scheme transparent, disbursement of the fund under IAY is made through account payee cheques to the beneficiaries in especially organised camps at the office of the Gram Panchayat. The beneficiaries are involved from the very beginning in the construction of their houses. They have to make their own arrangement for construction according to their requirement. The concept of Permanent Wait List (PWL) was brought into effect from 2006-07. A permanent waiting list of eligible households is prepared by each Gram Panchayat for selecting beneficiaries. The PWL is generated from the existing BPL list and includes only those families, who apart from being BPL have scored the lowest rank in respect of the status of housing in household survey. Beneficiaries of each social category have separate lists. The progress of construction and upgradation of houses under IAY has not been satisfactory. Table 4.41 shows the progress under IAY.

Table 4.41

Progress of Construction of Houses under IAY						
Year	Total available fund (Rs. crore)	Total fund utilized (Rs. crore)	No. of beneficiaries under new construction		No. of beneficiaries under upgradation	
			Target	Achievement	Target	Achievement
2004-05	306.76	273.50	103505	101358	51752	54240
2005-06	298.07*	205.86*	83248	66903	20850	33150
2006-07	367.28	280.51	88501	85200	22166	43638
2007-08	429.36	270.92	122357	87831*	30589	17444*
2008-09(P)	861.52	453.40	153697	117541	-----	4516
2009-10 (up to Oct. 09)	832.57	442.94	297564	115011	-----	124

P=Provisinal.

*=Revised

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Due to delay in preparation of PW list progress under IAY was hampered. During the year 2008-09, construction of only 1,17,541 new houses was sanctioned against the target of 1,53,697 beneficiaries. Total number of houses sanctioned for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes beneficiaries was 58.2 percent against the target of 60 per cent and that for minorities was 19 percent against the target of 15 percent coverage. Till October 2009, construction of 1,15,011 new houses was sanctioned under IAY and 124 kuccha houses were sanctioned for up gradation. Non availability of homestead land for the very poor households who are listed in the PW list is a major problem. There is a provision for providing fund up to Rs. 10,000/- per family for purchasing land. The Central and the State government equally share the fund. Land is also provided under the programme called "Chas O Basobaser Bhumidan Prakalpa".

D) Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana:

The Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY), which was launched in December 2000, has been included in the Bharat Nirman programme of Government of India. Under PMGSY all habitations having a population of 1000 and above (500 in the case of hill or tribal areas) are to be connected by all weather roads.⁶²

In order to implement PMGSY an agency known as the West Bengal State Rural Development Agency (WBSRDA) has been set up. This agency works in close with the Zilla Parisads. In each district there are one or more Programme Implementation Units (PIU). The PIUs are accountable to the WBSRDA, which is in charge of the programme in the State. For providing technical guidance, the Ministry of Rural Development of Government of India has identified four Institutions as the State Technical Agencies. They are IIT, Kharakpur, Bengal Engineering and Science University, Jalpaiguri Government Engineering College and NIT, Durgapur.

In each district, the Zilla Parisad approves its District Rural Roads Plan (DRRP) indicating the existing road network and also the roads proposed to be constructed for connecting the unconnected habitations to the existing road network. On the basis of DRRP, the Zilla Parisads identifies a Core Network Plan (CNWP) consisting of existing roads as well as all the new roads proposed for construction under PMGSY in order to provide single access connectivity to all unconnected habitations. The roads listed in CNWP are taken up for construction based on the criteria fixed by National Rural Roads Development Agency (NRRDA) of the Government of India.

Roads have been constructed in different phases from the year 2000-01. A fund for road construction is provided by the Government of India from its budget and additional fund is provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in few states including West Bengal for faster achievement of the connectivity target. Details of sanctioned project under PMGSY are shown in the Table 4.42.

Table 4.42

Phase wise Road Projects Sanctioned under PMGSY				
Year of Sanction	Sanctioned			
	No. of Roads	No. of Habitations	Length (k.m.)	Amount (Rs. crore)
2000-01 (Phase –I)	174*	853	826.32	140.00
2001-02 (Phase –II)	213	920	1126.60	305.49
2003-04 (Phase-III) (Part- I)	208#	816	955.64	278.31
2003-04 (Phase- III) (Part-II)	159	807	1073.94	320.97
2004-05(Phase-IV)	152	883	975.53	311.90
2005-06(ADB- Batch-I)	129	915	956.32	297.80
2005-06 (PMGSY)	233	1603	1667.70	666.21
2006-07(PMGSY)	335	1826	2127.70	790.25
2006-07 (ADB- Batch-II)	109	718	908.10	329.71
2007-08 (PMGSY)	482	1454	2198.04	908.12
2007-08 (ADB- Batch-III)	127	388	696.27	302.10
Total	2321	11183	13512.16	4650.86

*4 roads abandoned due to problem related to land.

#2 roads abandoned due to problem related to land.

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

E) Rural Infrastructure Development Fund:

Rural Infrastructure Development Fund (RIDF) is a major source of fund for development of infrastructure in the rural areas of the State. Loans are given in different tranches. The Panchayat and Rural Development Department is participating from the VIth tranche (2000-01). They submit their schemes. After the projects are sanctioned 20 per cent to 25 per cent of the project cost is allotted to the Zilla Parishads in advance. The fund is released subsequently on a reimbursement basis. In the Table 4.43, the details of allocation and utilization of fund over last five years under RIDF are shown.⁶³

Table 4.43

Details of Allocation and Utilisation of Fund under RIDF					
(Rs. in crore)					
Year	Cost of scheme sanctioned during the year	Provision made in the budget	Amount of fund released	Amount of fund utilised	No. of schemes completed
2003-04	2.59	42.37	125.89	101.06	32
2004-05	14.11	95.00	119.65	151.42	49
2005-06	7.98	139.65	84.54	59.19	47
2006-07	135.54	124.65	43.93	50.14	35
2007-08	200.38	125.00	73.31	88.78	42
2008-09	37.30	100.00	94.87	83.58	118

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

F) Natural Resource Management:

Two centrally sponsored programmes are in operation in the State for opening up livelihood opportunities through sustainable development of natural resources. These are Integrated Wasteland Development Programme (IWDP) and Drought Prone Area Programme (DPAP). The schemes are being executed in the districts of Purulia, Bankura, Birbhum, Paschim Medinipur and Burdwan. For DPAP, all the Blocks of Purulia, seven Blocks each of Bankura and Paschim Medinipur and two Blocks of Birbhum have been earmarked.⁶⁴

Watershed Development Programme being a process intensive programme requires long term planning with the active participation of the community throughout the entire stages of formulation, implementation of the project and also maintenance of the assets created. The funding for the IWDP is borne by the Central and State Governments in the ratio of 11:1 and in respect of DPAP the ratio is 75:25. As on 31.03.2009, 11 projects in Birbhum and 8 in Burdwan, 6 in Paschim Medinipur and 4 in Bankura had been sanctioned under IWDP. Similarly in the same year 304 micro watersheds for a total area of 18743 hectares had been sanctioned under DPAP in the four districts. Till 31.03.2009, a sum of Rs. 1352.0 lakhs was spent in 29 IWDP projects and a total area of 20238.27 hectares was treated. Under DPAP, a sum of Rs.1242.43 lakhs was spent.

Twenty seven NABARD-assisted watershed projects are also being implemented in the districts of Purulia, Birbhum, Bankura, Burdwan, Paschim Medinipur and Darjeeling. NABARD assistance comes partly as grant and partly as loan. These projects have two parts. In the first part, which is called 'capacity building phase' and 10 percent of the area of a watershed is taken up by the watershed community for implementation of various works with

grant funds provided by NABARD. After successful completion of this phase, the project enters into what is called 'full implementation phase' (FIP), which is implemented with loan component of the project. By and large, the progress in implementation of most of the projects has been satisfactory. Bhalki and Karotia in Ausgram Block II and I respectively of Burdwan district, Belia and Kashibedia in Bankura I Block of Bankura district, Paharpur in Kashipur Block of Purulia districts are some instances of successful watershed interventions under this programme.

G) Rashtriya Sam Vikash Yojana:

Rashtriya Sam Vikash Yojana (RSVY) is a special programme for the development of backward districts. At present eight districts are covered under RSVY. The thrust of the programme is to increase agricultural productivity and to generate employment opportunities. The districts are to receive Rs. 45 crore each over 3 years that is Rs. 15 crore per year. The status of RSVY for the eight districts is shown in Table 4.44.⁶⁵

Table 4.44

Synopsis of the Status Report of RSVY in respect of Eight Districts as on 31.03.2009				
(Amount in Rs. lakhs)				
District	Allocation for three years	Fund received	Expenditure	
			Amount	Percentage
Jalpaiguri	4500.00	4500.00	3556.72	79.04
Purulia	4500.00	4500.00	3834.24	85.20
Paschim Medinipur	4500.00	4500.00	3576.10	79.47
South 24-Parganas	4500.00	4500.00	3671.18	81.58
Uttar Dinajpur	4500.00	4500.00	4367.24	90.05
Dakshin Dinajpur	4500.00	4500.00	3754.12	83.42
Bankura	4500.00	4500.00	3871.42	86.03
Birbhum	4500.00	4500.00	3582.22	79.60
Total	36000.00	36000.00	30213.24	83.93

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

It can be seen from the Table 4.44 that 84 percent of total fund under RSVY has been utilized in three years. Uttar Dinajpur has utilized the maximum amount of its fund. Fund utilization by Jalpaiguri, Paschim Medinipur and Birbhum districts was not satisfactory. During 2007-08, Government of India launched a new programme of Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) by replacing RSVY. It was however decided to complete the projects already taken up under RSVY in eight districts and after that BRGF schemes will be introduced.

H) Programme for Backward Areas:

The Government of India has introduced Backward Region Grant Fund (BRGF) in 2006-07 to address the problem of regional imbalances in development. Assistance from this fund will supplement the development funds received from different sources by the identified regions. 11 districts have been brought under the fold of BRGF where funds would be provided on the basis of plans prepared at three tiers of panchayats and municipalities consolidated at the district level. RSVY programme is already in operation in 8 out of the 11 identified districts. In these 8 districts the BRGF funds will be placed after the RSVY funds are fully utilised. In the other three districts namely, Malda, Murshidabad and Purba Medinipur, the consolidated district plans have been prepared and sent to the Ministry of Panchayati Raj. The status of utilisation of funds under BRGF is shown in Table 4.45.⁶⁶

Table 4.45

Progress under BRGF up to 2008-09				
District	Fund released since inception (Rs. lakhs)	No. of projects completed since inception	Cumulative Expenditure since inception (Rs. lakhs)	Percentage of fund utilised
Malda	1437	179	1054.21	73.36
Murshidabad	1876	752	1366.39	72.84
Purba Medinipur	1675	931	1072.57	64.03
Purulia	1793	172	886.49	49.44
South 24 Parganas	5120	888	2360.94	46.11
Dakshin Dinajpur	2370	216	1172.89	49.49
Birbhum	1986	614	1515.30	76.30
Uttar Dinajpur	1588	202	972.21	61.22
Paschim Medinipur	2857	1335	2283.54	79.93
Bankura	2185	746	1640.00	75.06
Jalpaiguri	2188	313	1677.25	76.66
Total	25075	6348	16001.79	63.82

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

Since inception of BRGF programme, a total number of 6348 schemes have been completed in these three districts. The schemes include creation of infrastructure for social development, health and nutrition, housing for the poor, sinking of tube wells etc. So far, Rs. 250.75 crores was released and expenditure of Rs.160.02 crore has been incurred. Performances of Paschim Medinipur, Jalpaiguri and Bankura are satisfactory. Progress of BRGF in South 24-Parganas, Dakshin Dinajpur and Purulia has not been impressive. Under BRGF an amount of rupees one crore per district is made available to the State Government for developing capacities of the PRIs and for planning and monitoring. The capacity building initiatives are organised at the State level through SRD cell of WBSRDA. Since inception, Rs. 32.50 crore has been received as grant for capacity building and Rs. 15.73 crore has been utilised for the purpose till 31st March 2009.

I) Area Development:

In order to provide focussed attention to the development of the six North Bengal districts-Coochbehar, Jalpaiguri, Darjeeling, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur and Malda- Uttarbanga Unnayan Parishad (UUP) was formed in 2000-01. The UUP formulates developmental plans and implements them through Panchayati Raj institutions, urban local bodies, and other government and non-government institutions. The schemes under UUP are implanted in various sectors like agriculture and minor irrigation, soil conservation, small scale and agro based industries, infrastructure development, education and health, etc. Since inception total amount of Rs.26690.86 lakhs has been released under UUP and 2801 number of schemes has been taken up. Till 31.07.2009, 1876 schemes have been completed, 231 schemes are under progress and 694 schemes are yet to start. An amount of Rs.21522.35 lakhs has been utilised. In Table 4.46 shows fund received by each of the six districts since the formation of UUP till July, 2009 and its utilisation are shown.⁶⁷

Table 4.46

Fund Utilization by North Bengal Districts under UUP (up to July, 2009)				
(Amount in Rs. lakhs)				
District	Total Receipts	Fund Utilized	% of Utilization	Rank
Darjeeling	2679.35	2269.73	84.71	4
Jalpaiguri	6637.86	4449.41	67.03	6
Coochbehar	5884.76	5242.43	89.08	2
Malda	4736.33	3577.55	75.53	5
Uttar Dinajpur	3911.80	3542.87	90.56	1
Dakshin Dinajpur	2840.76	2440.36	85.90	3

Source: Development and Planning Department, Government of West Bengal.

Fund utilization by Jalpaiguri and Malda has not been satisfactory. The Paschimanchal Unnayan Parshad (PUP) was formed for promoting integrated development of 74 Blocks in the red laterite areas of five districts: Purulia, Bankura, Paschim Medinipur, Birbhum and Burdwan. These areas are inhabited predominantly by Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste population. The formation of PUP was primarily to uplift these disadvantaged sections. In order to intensify the development work in those areas Department of Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs was created in July, 2006. The department has made a number of interventions in the field of minor irrigation, supply of drinking water, excavation of ponds, surface water preservation, horticulture, education, healthcare, animal resource development, employment generation, rural housing etc. In the Table 4.47 the funds received and utilized by the 5 districts for the development of the Blocks under PUP are shown.

Table 4.47

Report on PUP as on 31.10.2009				
(Amount in Rs. Lakhs)				
District	Total release up to 31.03.2009 from 2006-07	Utilization till 31.10.2009	% of Utilization	Rank
Paschim Medinipur	3766.56	1983.37	52.66	3
Bankura	1852.05	752.37	40.62	4
Purulia	1869.90	653.97	34.97	5
Burdwan	1415.45	1033.21	73.02	1
Birbhum	1087.21	694.26	63.57	2

Source: Paschimanchal Unnayan Affairs, Government of West Bengal.

J) Community Health Care Management Initiative:

The State Government launched the 'Community Health Care Management Initiative' (CHCMI) in order to ensure convergence of health care services at the community level with direct involvement of the community and the panchayats. The Gram Panchayat, which is the local government at the level of group of villages, has been envisaged as the nodal agency for ensuring the delivery of health related services and their convergence at its level. The first step in this direction was to institutionalise the process of regular monitoring of the activities of the local level service providers. For this purpose, regular meetings of all Gram Panchayat level functionaries, such as health sub-centre staff, Anganwadi workers, members of the

health sub-committee of the Gram Panchayat are held once a month to review the status of health service delivery and to take corrective measures.⁶⁸

Special emphasis is given on primary health care services like immunization, anti-natal and post-natal services, registration of birth and death, status of nutrition of children, water supply and sanitation. The State Government has made the office of Gram Panchayat as the sector office of health supervisors. This will help the Gram Panchayats to monitor the performance of the health sub-centres through the supervisors. CHCMI also seeks to involve Self Help Groups of women for sensitizing the community in various health related issues and also for facilitating service delivery. The CHCMI seeks to ensure that Anganwadi workers, SHG members, members of various voluntary organisations, government and panchayat functionaries work together for achieving better health outcome. In order to make all those involved in CHCMI aware of the objectives of the programme and to make them understand the approach necessary for achieving these objectives, the State Government has undertaken a number of training programmes for all stake holders of the CHCMI. Many people living in remote areas do not have access to curative health care facilities. In order to overcome this problem the State Government has decided to strengthen the dispensaries at the Gram Panchayat level. As on March, 2009, 978 homeopathic dispensaries had been sanctioned by the Health and Family Welfare department out of which 930 were functioning. In addition, sanction has been given to set up 200 Ayurvedic and 250 Allopathic dispensaries 65 Allopathic medical camps are in operation.

K) Social Security:

Under the National Old Age Pension Scheme (NOAPS) pension is paid to the destitute males and females over 65 years of age. Previously, the amount of pension was Rs 100 only. From 2006-07, the pension amount has been raised to Rs. 400 per month. Expenditure on the scheme is shared equally by the Central and the State Government. From November 2007, the scheme was renamed as Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme (IGNOAPS). Thus whoever belongs to BPL and attains the age of 65 years is now covered under IGNOAPS. In 2008-09, 8,87,759 beneficiaries were identified under IGNOAPS programme and an amount of Rs. 327.28 crore was utilized for making payments. Number of beneficiaries and the expenditure on the scheme in different years is shown in the Table 4.48.⁶⁹

Table 4.48

Performance of a National Old Age Pension Scheme		
Year	Number of Beneficiaries	Expenditure (Rs. in crore)
2002-03	332876	30.20
2003-04	309896	34.45
2004-05	291671	39.05
2005-06	451579	59.86
2006-07	474106	111.65
2007-08	821033	281.88
2008-09	887759	327.28
2009-10 (upto Oct., 09)	1033587	306.93

Source: Department of Panchayat and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal.

The National Family Benefit Scheme provides a onetime grant of Rs. 10000 in the case of death of the primary bread earner of a below the poverty line family in the age group 18 to 65 years. The grant is to be provided within 4 weeks of the death. In 2008-09, 32,792 beneficiaries were covered under the scheme involving an expenditure of Rs 32.80 crore. A scheme called 'Provident Fund for Landless Agricultural Labourers' (PROFLAL) is in operation in the State since 1998. Under the scheme all agricultural labourers with landholding below 50 decimal and within the age group of 18 to 50 years are eligible for the scheme. An eligible agricultural labourer deposits Rs. 20 per month and the State Government contribute an equal amount till the subscriber reaches the age of 50 years. On reaching 50 years, the accumulated amount along with the usual interest is paid to the subscriber. If the subscriber does not want to continue the scheme, his savings as well as the government's contribution is paid to the subscriber within six months of closing of the amount. Till 31st March 2009, a total of 8,26,742 agricultural labourers had deposited Rs. 29.22 crore on which the accrued interest was Rs. 9.67 crore.

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