

CHAPTER – 1
INTRODUCTION

Chapter-1

Introduction (Objective of the study, Theoretical Framework, Review of Literature and Methodology): -

INTRODUCTION:

Contemporary development theory, under the influence of globalization, has shifted emphasis from planned and administrated development to entrepreneurial and deadministrated development. As a corollary of this, concepts like democratic decentralization, good governance, sustainable development and empowerment are being popularized and are being tried. The rationale behind this is that governance, in order to be good, needs to be responsive, accountable and efficient that requires it to be decentralized so that it comes close to the people identify their problems and plan, decide and implement accordingly. This form of decentralized governance would ensure development on sustainable manner and thus empowerment will take place and will be sustained.

In line with this broad theoretical framework, in India also the emphasis has been shifted from the traditional trickle-down approach to modern bottom-up approach with more emphasis on people's participation in policy planning and administration. Thus Panchayati Raj institutions with Constitutional sanction accorded have been the foundations of decentralized governance for development and empowerment In India as they seek to ensure participatory planning and execution of development and in turn, empowerment.

However, the objective of decentralized governance is to involve cross-section of the people including women in the process of decision-making and development. But, in spite of this formal Constitutional mechanism for ensuring participation and employment of all section of the society, women's participation and empowerment are not satisfactory. Particularly the participation and empowerment by the women of weaker sections and Muslim are found to be unsatisfactory.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY:

Taken into account, the above noted background, the primary objective of the present study is to identify and find out the extent of participation and role of the women of weaker sections and the Muslims in the decentralized governing process, namely, in the Gram Samsad, Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat, Panchayati Samiti and Zilla Parishad, Along with finding the impact of the participation and role on the

overall empowerment of women of the weaker sections, that is the Scheduled castes and the Muslims. The issue that is to be addressed is whether political empowerment of women that is sought to be achieved through Constitutional reservation has been functional and whether political empowerment has been functional to the overall empowerment of women in general and those of the weaker sections and the Muslims in particular.

So far as India is concerned, observers noticed contradictory views on empowerment. While a group of observers held that though various development policies and programmes particularly through the Panchayat bodies for empowerment of the common people have taken place, others are of the opinion that empowerment in real sense of the term has been in paper's only. At the same time, women compose a vital part of the society. If this important segment continues to lag behind their male counterpart, and if they do not empowered, this will create an imbalance in the overall process of social development. Understanding this reality, a number of policies, programmes have taken to ensure empowerment of women in India.

Considering the above mentioned situation, the present study seeks to highlight on this as to whether empowerment of women in general and that the weaker sections and the Muslim's in particular has been achieved and if not, what are the factors that made hindrances in the way of empowerment of women in India.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

Given the broad objectives as outlined above, the present research seeks to address to the following specific research questions: -

- a) What are the formal as well as the operational conceptualization of participation, role and empowerment?
- b) Given the norm of conceptualization, what is the extent of participation of women of the weaker sections and Muslims in the decentralized governing process?
- c) What is the role-played by the women of the weaker sections and the Muslims in the political process of decentralized governance?
- d) What are the functional and behavioral changes in women of weaker sections and the Muslims in the period under study in social, economic, political and cultural fields?
- e) Given the basic parameters of empowerment can it be regarded that women of weaker sections and the Muslims have been empowered?
- f) If yes, what are the conditions that helped the process of empowerment?
- g) If not, what are the factors that came in the process of empowerment?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

In any socio-economic development programme, Empowerment of women is one of the key issues. Women's empowerment can be viewed as continuum of several interrelated and mutual reinforcing components. "Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life" (Pillai, 1995).

Thus, empowerment is considered as a process whose outcome leads to renegotiate gender relations, increases women's access and control over human, material, financial and intellectual resources. Empowerment of women can be viewed as a process which enables women to raise questions and analyze root of their subordination, to articulate, this problem, ways of solving their problems and to take decisions, to make forward and act upon. Empowerment is a long process, which does not end with election, rather it continues to decision-making, planning, execution of development programme supervising and assessment of the programme and sharing the benefits of the development. Women's participation into policies at the institution of local Self-Government through reservation of seats is surely a positive development, but sincere efforts should be taken from different corners, to make women's participation in policies successful. For this, ideas and consciousness of women should be increased and they must be educated. The empowerment is frequently stimulated through participatory rural appraisal exercise giving women a sense of how they can improve upon their lives in particular way. Thus, in short, it can be said that, empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision making power and control, and to transformative action. (Sahay, Sushama, 1998).

For women, empowerment is the restructuring of gender relations within both family and society at large, and it is the society's recognition of women's equality with men in terms of their worth to society as independent persons (Hapke, 1992). The empowerment process is facilitated by creating awareness about one's rights and responsibilities and socio-economic and political opportunities. (Pandey, 1993). Empowerment implies a fundamental redistribution of power, which also enables women to renegotiate their existence on equitable basis (Banerjee, 1992). According to Webster's New World Dictionary (1982), empowerment is a process by which power is gained, developed, seized, facilitated or given. On the other hand, to be 'empowered' also refers to the state of possessing or controlling power, being able to act or prevent action. Thus, conceptually, empowerment includes both 'process' and 'product' dimensions. (Sahay, Sushama, 1998).

It was hoped that through constitutional and legal measures the process of development and also empowerment would be achieved. But despite various movements and legal support, and despite sanctioning of various development projects, the picture of women's empowerment is not satisfactory. Thus, it can be suggested in the theoretical framework that overall empowerment can be achieved only through political empowerment in general, and women's empowerment in particular.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Since the early 1970s, decentralization has been the subject of increasing scholarly attention across the globe. Decentralized governance has come to be regarded as an important vehicle that can promote democracy and development and as such it has become an important component of development strategy in most developing countries.

However, there is so much of literature on democratic decentralization but few on empowerment are available. A number of scholars have conducted empirical and field survey on the basic concepts of decentralization as well as women empowerment. Decentralization does not merely mean divisions of the functions between state government and local bodies; but its purpose is to train local leadership to assume responsibilities and serve the people with maximum efficiency. Decentralization is not dilution or devolution alone. It is strengthening through a process of broad basing the decision-making which makes the most active and most knowledgeable participation of the people.

According to Iqbal Narain (1963), Democratic Decentralization implies people's right to initiate their projects for local well being and the power to execute and operate them in an autonomous manner. Paul Appleby (1962) holds that, Democratic Decentralization appears to suggest that decentralization axiomatically enhances democracy. To him, decentralization curbs the powers of bureaucracy, which not only stultifies the initiative of the people but also curbs people's participation in development process. Henry Maddick (1975) said that, decentralization embraces both devolution and decentralization.

Pranab Bardhan (1996) defined decentralization in the sense of political decision-making power from mere administrative delegation of functions of central government to local agencies. To him, local accountability is essential in decision-making and its implications.

Prof. Hansen (1963) uses the term 'democratic decentralization' to identify the process whereby the responsibilities of the central government are transferred to subordinate agencies which are elected by geographic or functional constituencies. These agencies acquire source from their powers not by delegation from higher administrative but by legislative or constitutional provisions.

Alderfer (1946) holds that genuine decentralization involves a significant measure of either deconcentration, delegation, or devolution, namely, conferring of real powers on local authorities. He further holds that, decentralization also implies clear understanding of socio-cultural and legal factors.

Norman Uphoff (1986), opines that decentralization is the physical dispersion on shifting of the offices or seats of decision-making, whereby decision-makers are located closer to the activities and persons for whom they work but to be accountable to the central authority.

Neil Webster (1992), described decentralization as a means to make the state more responsive and more acceptable to the local needs than that it could be with concentration of administrative powers and responsibility of the state. According to Richard. C. Crook (1998), decentralization provides real benefits to poor peasants and disadvantaged group, women a lesser extent. To P.R. Dubashi (1970), Democratic Decentralization, in simpler term, "would be free popular management of local affairs".

According to U.N. study, "Decentralization of government relieves members of the legislature and of the national executive from involvement of purely local issues, frees key officials from onerous and detailed tasks and increases the speed and effectiveness of the administration at all levels."

According to Rondinelli and Cheema (1983), decentralization is the transfer of planning, decision-making of the administrative authority from the central government to its field organizations, local administrative units, semi- autonomous and parastatal organizations, local governments, or non-government organizations.

In traditional use the term 'governance' means a synonym for government, but in the current usage the term is being used in a redirected mode with its new implication. According to R. Rhodes, 'governance' signifies 'a change in the meaning of government, referring to new process of governing; or a changed condition of ordered rule; or the new method by which society is governed.

According to J. Kooiman and M. Van Vliet, the notion of governance indicates to the creation of a structure or an order which cannot be externally imposed, but is the result of the interaction of a multiplicity of governing and each other influencing actors.

Reviews of literature shows that the term 'governance' is used in a variety of ways and has a variety of meanings. (Rhodes, 1996; Stoker, 1997). To Gerry Stoker there is a baseline agreement that governance refers to the development of governing styles in which boundaries between and within Public and Private sectors have become blurred. The essence of governance is its focus on governing mechanisms which do not rest on recourse to the authority and sanctions of government (Stoker, G., 1998).

World Bank Report (1992), defines governance as: "The manner in which power is exercised in the management of a country's economic and social resources for development." (Satyanarayan, T, 2003).

However, decentralization and governance are precondition for development. Democracy, decentralization and development are very much co-related. E.H. Valsan (1970), holds that, even where democracy was not much of a trumpeted ideology, decentralization was considered essential for the achievement of development goals.

According to S.V. Rangacharyulu, (1993), 'development' indicates a quantitative growth in the social and economic areas, which ultimately should result in the process of a qualitative change reflecting improvement in the condition of living of the people. To him, development is a single process to which both social and economic elements would jointly and/ or individually contribute.

According to Sellamna (1999), Callinicos (1997-98), Washbrook (1997), Peet and Harwick(1999), Turner (1997), Howard(1995), development is an institutionalized way of the exercise of power. Escobar (2000), sees development "as a pervasive cultural discourse with profound consequences for the production of social reality in the so called third world."

Rist (2000), from a negative point of view, sees development as a postmodern illusion, the promise of material welfare that has lost its credibility.

Sassen (1998), Hoogvelt (1997), and Scholte(2000) holds that, the cultural and political hemorrhage of nation states in their increasing dependency on western government, multinational corporations and the Washington financial institutions, is the most obvious negative impact of the process of globalization, a process that in fact in economic terms appears to be in the direction of a further redundancy and marginalization of the developing world, rather than in the direction of inclusion in the world economy.

Baidyanath Mishra (1996), holds that the scope of decentralization is not only to ensure the democratic character of the government, but also improves the effectiveness of planned development of the country.

P.R. Dubashi, (1960), Ensminger Douglas (1961), L.C. Gupta (1965), P.L. Mathur (1965), Bharat Bhushan Gupta (1968), and D.S. Chauhan (1977) expressed the view that for the effective functioning of decentralized governance adjustments should be made between the institutions of democratic decentralization and various bureaucracies. They held that, to meet the administrative problem and achieve practical feasibility as well as actual planning, there should be bigger units which could strengthen the local authorities with regional level to facilitate the formulation of comprehensive plan. Thus, they emphasized the importance of democratic decentralization and the institution of local self-government for implementation of various programmes.

Gandhian view also emphasizes on the development from the below. The Balwantary Mehta study team recommended decentralization to a three-tier Panchayat structure.

Sweta Mishra (1994) opined that from the mid-1980's hectic activities have been continuing for strengthening local bodies and achieving goals of democratic decentralization.

Noted economist Kamta Prasad(1990), expressed the view that more and more involvement of the people will rejuvenate the sagging spirit of self-help in the process of democratic decentralization as ultimate goals of development. Democratic decentralization expresses the notion of popular government at grass-root, democracy and involves people directly in administration, said Bharat Bhushan Gupta (1968).

Rural development is important in the discussion of decentralized governance. According to the World Bank, rural development is a strategy designed to improve specific group of people- the rural poor. V.R. Gaekwad (1979) raised the question regarding the role of bureaucrats in the welfare and economic development of rural people. B.S. Bhargava (1979) expressed the view that political development and growth of democracy depends on the local leadership and their functioning in the Panchayati Raj institutions. Abdul Aziz (1996) held the view that present-day emerging political culture is decentralized governance and the participation of people in it through democratic institutions of lower levels below the national level. In view of non-implementation of various economic development programmes, Sushil Kumar (1990) stressed the need for reengineering the process of development, which has its roots in indigenous perception of democratic decentralization.

Decentralized planning has got momentum in the studies of a series of scholars. Prominent among them are Sweta Mishra (1997), S.P. Ranga Rao (1997), I Satya Sunderam (1997), Mahinder Singh (1997), M.A. Oommen (1997) who emphasized on development planning 'from below'. They held that decentralized planning process is brought nearer to the people who are the beneficiaries of development and they formulate plans independently by them. To remove the demerits of centralized planning, the necessity for decentralized planning has emerged.

According to B.K. Thapliyal (1990), the ultimate objective of the development planning is to maximize the welfare of the people, where planning is attempted at different Politico-administrative and executive levels, to achieve greater integration

between the development needs and priorities of small areas. Thus, L.C. Jain pointed out that, the negative aspect of decentralization is bound to emerge, if decentralization remains confined to the political level without constructive component of area planning. So P. N. Sharma (1987), Durgadas Ray (1988) and Savitri Sharma (1988) agreed unanimously that people's participation in rural development at the grass root level should be given more importance.

In India, any discussion of local self-government shall remain incomplete if it does not look at decentralized planning. According to Prof D. T. Lakdawalla (1996) noted economist and former deputy chairman of planning commission, it is now a well recognized dictum that since local resources are to be harnessed, local needs to be consulted and local knowledge is needed, a large degree of decentralization is essential for the success of developmental process.

C.H. Hanumantha Rao (1989) holds that 'barring a few exceptions, the performance of decentralized planning has been dismal.' He listed three major reasons for this- political and bureaucratic resistance at the state level to sharing power with the local level institutions, dominance of Panchayati Raj institutions by the rural elite, and lack of political will for decentralized planning. Thus, Shri Rao recommended for structural changes of the decentralized governance system to ensure the rise of rural power including the weaker sections to a position of dominance in the decentralized institutions.

Thus, in the context of development, decentralized governance is considered to be a means and an end- means to development and that secures grass root democracy or 'local democracy' on equity and justice said by M. Yasin, Srinanda Dasgupta and P.K. Sengupta (2002 & 2003).

In India, the prime instruments of decentralization at grass root level are the Panchayati Raj in India. Prof. Rajni Kothari (1996) wanted to see the entire process of decentralization as a means of effective democratic functioning. He holds that, decentralized governments should be seen as instruments of social and economic transformation. Prabhat Datta (1994) thinks that democratic decentralization associates people with local administration, and agrees with the rights of the people to initiate and execute decisions in an autonomous way. G. Thimmaiah (1998) expressed his view that political compulsion of 1980's gave birth to democratic decentralization under the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act of 1992.

According to S. Narawanswamy (1998), in the eve of 21st century, grass root institutions must be strengthened and Panchayati Raj institutions should be guided by the poorest of the poor. The institutional expression policy of 'decentralized governance' in India is identified by 'Panchayati Raj'. The Balwantray Mehta committee recommendations (1957) have laid down the major thrust in introducing 'Panchayati Raj' system as institutions of decentralized governance after independence in India. The Ashok Mehta committee Report (1978) provided a new look towards decentralization and development in the country.

Sharat Kumar (1997) has said that Panchayati Raj institutions have been given the responsibilities for making and implementing plans for economic development under 243-G and 243-ZE.

To Hahn- Been- Lee (1986), "Development is a process acquiring a sustained growth of a system's capability to cope with new, continuous changes towards the achievement of progressive, political and social objectives". According to Geherd Colm and Theodor Geiger "development means change plus growth". Development means people- the preparation and activation of the people is the cause of economic and social development. (Laufer, Leopold, 1986). Raj Singh (1998) has mentioned that development has to be conceived as an agent of peoples power, that is, the Panchayati Raj; instead of conceiving Panchayati Raj as an agent of development. Hans Raj (1992) has expressed the view since India's independence Panchayat institutions have been given vast powers and they have made active participations in reconstructing decentralized governance and rural development. C. Narashiman (1989) has opined that rural development and Panchayati Raj are linked with each other inseparably, and this provided ample of opportunities for self- help and self-reliance to the people of rural areas.

While Debesh Chakraborty (1981), Nageshwar Prasad (1986) and B. N. Sahay (1989) are of the positive views that as the instruments of decentralization of power Panchayati Raj institutions directly provide plans and funds to the rural people, and thus they increase their competence to make plan and implement development schemes, Jagannath Pathy (1980), has expressed his negative view by saying that decentralization of power through Panchayati Raj institutions remained unsuccessful.

With the passage of the 73rd constitution Amendment Act, 1992, the journey of third generation Panchayats in India began. Thus, Hoshier Singh (1995) firmly believed that, meaningful role has been provided to Panchayati Raj bodies through the 73rd constitution Amendment Act, which has to promote decentralization to the people at the grass root level by creating responsive village Panchayats. Mr. Shyam Roy (1995) advocated for the participation and capturing positions in the Panchayati Raj institutions by the poor and weaker sections of people.

Prabhat Datta holds the view that only constitutional sanction cannot issue a vibrant system of Panchayat Raj. To him, the workings of Panchayati Raj system in some of the states have created the condition of bureaucratic centralization rather than democratic decentralization.

The 73rd constitution Amendment Act (1992) provided participation of women in local government. Hazel D' Lima (1993) held that before the 73rd constitution Amendment Act, major participation of women in the local bodies were from dominant sections of the society, Nirmal Buch (2000) expressed his view that the post-73rd Amendments Panchayats have shown emerging leadership of rural women in the field of local self-government institutions.

P.L. D. V. Padmakar (1998), C. P. Vithal (1998) and R. Gangadhar Reddy (1998) held that 73rd constitution Amendment Act has provided ample scope for the strengthening of the Panchayat bodies, and devolution of finance will occur to those bodies. In the post- 73rd Amendment scenario, the Panchayati Raj institutions have taken the charge of development, and weaker sections and women have given a share to perform their role. Thus S. R. Ranga Rao (1998) expressed his opinion that

Panchayati Raj institutions are not only traditional local bodies, but it involves in the participation of rural people in the process of socio-economic reconstruction and development of rural India. According to Shrawan Kumar Singh (1994), Panchayati Raj institutions have been considered as an important device for rural economic development. Decentralized governance is, at the same time, both the economic and social terms, which empower people to their capacities, resources and opportunities, said by Manoranjan Mohanty (1995).

Empowerment means the manifestation and redistribution of power that challenges patriarchal ideology and the male dominance, held by Chandra (1997). Empowerment can be taken into account as the 'power of the powerless'. It can be mainly applied to women, the backward class, poor and peoples of the weaker sections of the society.

Empowerment is mainly concerned with ordinary people rather than the advantaged people. To Pillai (1995), Empowerment is an active, multi-dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity in all spheres of life.

The Nepal Human Development Report, (2004), holds empowerment as a process and also the result of the process- whereby the powerless or less powerful members of society and the women gain greater access and control over material and intellectual resources, and challenges the ideologies of discrimination and subordination which justify this unequal distribution.

Eva Soren Sen (1997) holds that, empowerment implies that the institutionalization of democratic procedures, which ensures both the aggregative and the integrative aspects of democracy.

The National Perspective Plan for women 1988-2000 A.D. (1998) has stated and vulnerability of women in all sectors-social, economic, political, education, health care, nutrition and legal. As women are oppressed in all spheres of life, they need to be in all walks of life.

The Rio-de-Janeiro Earth Summit (1992) wanting to create a just and healthy planet, has pledged their commitment to the empowerment of women which is the central and powerful force in the search for a safe environment, economic and social justice, adequate reallocation of resources, the survival of all species and the common goal of a healthy planet in which future generation can flourish.

According to Kamla Bhashin (1992), Empowerment of women means- recognizing women's contribution, women's knowledge; helping women fight their own fears, and feelings of inadequacy and inferiority; women enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity, women becoming economically independent and self-reliant.

According to Hall (1992), empowered women define their attitudes, values, and behaviour in relation to their own real interests.

Foner and Kertzer (1978), Marks (1997) held that women's empowerment helps women to make necessary transitions over their life courses.

Kessler- Harris (1981), Levy (1989), hold that women's empowerment allows women to be appreciated and acknowledged for who they are and what they do. Oliker (1989), and Fitzpatrick (1990) are of the opinion that women's support of other women heralds a new stage of women's development, where women can unite and act collectively to reduce and remove oppressive social structures.

Mason and Bumpass (1975) hold the view that women's empowerment modifies women's existing sexual ideologies by introducing women's own goals and values into their decision-making.

Randour (1987) holds that women must know themselves sufficiently to be come freer, and this occurs only when they understand how much society controls them and perpetuates their subordination.

Diaz- Diocaretz and Zavala (1985), Iglitzin and Ross (1986) opined that when women make their own empowerment into a goal close to their hearts- a primary task of each day, they will inevitably become an integral part of grass roots of activism.

According to Chandra (1987), empowerment simply means the manifestation of redistribution of power that changes patriarchal ideology and the male dominance.

Scholars show that since the mid 1980s the term 'empowerment' became popular in the field of development especially in reference to women. In India, during the sixth five- year plan (1980-85); the concept of women and development was introduced for the first time in the plan paper.

During the mid 1980s the term 'empowerment' became popular in the field of development especially in reference to women. Srilatha Batliwala (1995) observed, "In grassroots programmes and policy debates alike, empowerment has virtually replaced terms such as welfare, upliftment, community participation, and poverty alleviation to describe the goal of development and intervention." Apte (1995) has stated that the concept of women's empowerment appears to be the end result of a number of critical discussions, dialogues and debates generated by the women's empowerment throughout the world and particularly by Third World Feminists.

According to Pillai (1995), 'Empowerment is an active, multi- dimensional process which enables women to realize their full identity and powers in all spheres of life. Staples (1990) argues that the ability to act or to prevent action goes to the heart of any definition of 'power'. The prefix 'em' is attached to the noun 'power' to create a verb. According to Webster's New World Dictionary (1982), this prefix is used to form verbs meaning "to make, make into or like, cause to be". Thus, to empower is to make or cause power. The noun 'empowerment' which is not listed in Webster's New World Dictionary (1982) refers to the process by which power is gained, developed, seized, facilitated or given.

According to Zippy (1995), empowerment represents a means for accomplishing community development tasks and can be conceptualized as involving the key elements giving community members the authority to make decisions and choices and facilitating the development of the knowledge and resources necessary to exercise these choices.

Barker in his *The Social Work Dictionary* (1991), defines empowerment as the "process of helping a group or community to achieve political influence or relevant legal authority".

According to Bandura (1986), empowerment is the process through which individuals gain efficiency, defined as the degree to which an individual perceives that he or she controls his or her environment.

N. K. Banerjee (1995) holds that empowerment is a collective and individual autonomy which makes control over one's life. It is a process of building capacities and confidence for taking decisions and control over the sources of power. C. B.

Muthamma (1996) emphasizes that to make country's progress further and faster, people should be empowered through education and development schemes so that they can run their own affairs.

While analyzing the various factors of empowerment Kiran Saxena (1994), Nitya Rao (1996), Uma Joshi (1997), and Kameshwari Jandhyala (1998) emphasized that economic emancipation is one of the vital factors of empowerment, though they mentioned the self-enlightment, renegotiation of gender-relation would enhance women's access and sustain the process of empowerment. Economic empowerment has more impact on overall empowerment, social empowerment and a more participation in decision-making and active participation would help successful empowerment opined by Sujatha Vishwanathan (1997). P. Anandraj Kumar (1995) also admitted that the need of the hour is to adopt an honest and continuous initiative for ensuring economic liberty of women.

According to Susheela Kaushik (1993), mere physical participation in the formal political institutions like election or political parties, social movements or demonstrations are not enough. Sakima Hasan (1997) holds that, women's empowerment is a gaining autonomy and control over one's life including economic, social and political empowerment. It is believed by Susheela Kaushik (1993), that only through socio-economic advancement and increase in number, political empowerment of women can be achieved. Agreeing with the reservation process Nirmala Despande (1989) has expressed her deep concern by stating that women are not inferior or second class citizen. They should be empowered properly.

Abu Elias Sarkar (1991), holds that since last 1970s, New Public Management (NPM) has become a dominant theme in restructuring of the Public sector in both developed and developing countries. Bangladesh is no exception. Of late, the Bangladesh Government has also decided to embark on market-based Public administration reform. It gives emphasizes on minimal government, debureaucratization, decentralization, and market orientation of Public service, privatization and performance etc. These features signify a market contrast with the traditional model of administration, which embodies a dominant role of the government in the provision of services, centralization and so forth. And the other name of market contrast of administration is democratic decentralization.

The case of Indian Administration is not also different from Bangladesh. Due to the impact of financial assistance from the World Bank, IMF, increasing dependency on western government, multinational corporations, the policy of globalization etc, Indian government also gives emphasis on debureaucratization, privatization, market orientation of Public Service and decentralization.

In Gandhian thinking emphasis also has been given on the development from the bottom. Bharat Bhushan Gupta (1968), is of the opinion that democratic decentralization takes the concept of popular government at grass root democracy and involves people directly in administration.

The Panchayati Raj Institutions in India are the prime instruments of decentralization at the grass root level. Towards the mid-fifties the need to properly develop the rural people with a view to entrusting with the task of rural reconstruction, was felt in certain quarters, which consequently led to the establishment of Panchayati

Raj, the profounder of the scheme originally described it as democratic decentralization, stated by S. Bhatnagar (1978).

The Balwantray Mehta Committee recommended for democratic decentralization to a three-tier structure. Decentralized Planning through Panchayati Raj institutions assume special significance in regard to the decentralized growth and social justice- this view has been expressed by M.R. Biju and J. N. Panda (1991), Satya Sundaram (1994), and Ajinadar Jain (1997). "Our democracy cannot become strong unless the democracy at the village level is strong and the genuine development of rural areas can take place only through a process of decentralized planning and implementation involving fully involving the local people". - Said by P. V. Narashima Rao (1993).

Shrawan Kumar Singh (1994) holds that, Panchayati Raj Institutions have been considered as an important vehicle for rural economic development since debureaucratization and decentralization of power would encourage local initiative for development.

Rabindra Chaudhury (1997), has said that women are not the ornamental showpiece for human being; they have the equal right to level for their uplift in the society. Focusing on political empowerment of women, B. S. Bhargava (1992), expressed his view by stating that empowerment gives women the capacity to influence the decision making process by integrating them into our political system and other related socio-economic forum. On the other hand Saraswati Halder (1998) and Shahi (1998) have said that, in India, political equality has no meaning because traditionally women are thought of inferior in all kinds- physically, intellectually and socially. Eradication of poverty and empowerment of women in society go beyond the question the question of credit- said by Usha Narayan (1998). K. Shubha Rao (1995) held that for empowerment of women, more knowledge about the workings of Panchayati Raj is not sufficient.

Ghanashyam Shah (1987), has said that in India ethnic and economic issues are intermingled, majority of the population belongs to the lower strata of the society and women are predominated. As a result of all this, grass root mobilization has been emerged in India. Sadhana Arya (1997), Shashi Sukla (1996) and Justice Mrs. M. Fatima Beevi expressed their experience by saying that due to the social conservatism; Muslim women are not in a position to take full advantages of modernization. They further held that, due to ignorance of law, many of the Muslim women have to face problems in the society, and it is reluctance for which, they assert with their rights properly in the society.

It has been argued by Preethi Raj (1995), K. Manju Devi (1997), and jyothi Mitra (1999), that lack of socio-economic empowerment has placed Indian women as backward citizens of the country. Manu Bhaskar (1993), stated this experience that women are the oppressed sex, exploited on the job by their employers and oppressed at home by their family surroundings. During the late eighteenth centuries, Indian women started to join in politics, but their involvement in politics was jeopardized by religious fundamentalism.

S. H. Patil (1997) and Parul Rishi (1997) and Abha Chauhan (1998) expressed their views that Indian policy-makers will have to ensure social equality, economic independence and adequate education to the women of rural India, if a huge number

of rural women cast their votes independently. The scholars have expressed their hope that women's empowerment and entrance to decision-making would definitely lead to a sustainable future for the country.

Mahi Pal (1994) S.S. Meenakshi Sundaram (1995) Sweta Mishra and S. N. Mishra (1995), and Linda M.G. Zerilli (1998), have viewed that illiteracy, poverty and ignorance are the main obstacles in the way of empowerment of women even after the enactment of the 73rd constitution Amendment Act which empowered women in decision-making. They held that effective participation of women in Panchayati Raj Institutions would not be successful if the Panchayati Raj system does not operate in a democratic way, without a proxy. Madhu Kishwar (1996), opined that for ensuring a sensible proportional representation for women without mechanical reservation, we need wide spread electoral reforms which will curb the presence of money and muscle power in democratic decision-making.

According to M. N. Roy (1995) and Aurobindo Ghosh (1997), women are the contributors to development rather than the beneficiaries of welfare measures taken up by the Panchayats in West Bengal. Expressing an optimistic view on West Bengal Panchayats, Biplab Dasgupta (1989), has said that West Bengal Panchayats have achieved a highly fruitful and meaningful experience and experiment in an unchartered area in the Indian Context.

However, Paromesh Acharya (1993), viewed that the dominations of the privileged classes over the rural power structure remains unchallenged, even after the apparent 'success' of Panchayati Raj institutions in West Bengal under the Left-Front Government since 1978.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY:

From the overview of the existing literature, it appears that most of the studies deal in most cases with decentralized governance, that is with Panchayati Raj institutions, less emphasis has been given on empowerment of women, particularly women of weaker sections of the society and the Muslim community. Here in lies the research gap. Thus the present research work seeks to measure an in depth study of a district (Cooch Behar) in West Bengal the process and level of empowerment of women of weaker sections and Muslims. This will be done with the broad theoretical framework that there is interrelationship between democratic decentralization and empowerment and the two are heavily interdependent. At the same time, the present research will enhance the existing body of knowledge on empowerment in general and in the Indian context in particular, will help to list the research questions thus help to evaluate the theoretical framework, identify the factors and forces that tend to come in the way of empowerment in India, and finally, suggest measures along which future courses of action need to be undertaken to ensure and strengthen the process of women empowerment.

METHODOLOGY:

The primary objective of the study is to identify and find out the extent of participation, role and empowerment of women of weaker sections and Muslims in the

decentralized governing process. As women constitute nearly half of the total population of the society, there is no disagreement regarding the necessity of women's empowerment. Modern scholars have agreed that women play an important role in the society through their potentialities. So their discourses on gender issues have given a prime importance by the modern scholars in political sciences and other social sciences.

In India, the discussions on gender-equity became more relevant because women in India are traditionally accepted only in a supportive role. But with the expansion of education and democratic norms all over the globe, the traditional views on women are going to be changed. Now it has become a general acceptance that women should be brought at par with men in all walks of life if they are not already. To achieve this end, a number of policies, programmes, and actions have taken in India to ensure empowerment of women.

Taken into account this vastly accepted notion that women should be empowered, the present study seeks to analyze to what extent women have been empowered and what factors came in the way of women's empowerment.

Given the objective and research questions to be addressed, the present study is exploratory, descriptive and diagnostic in nature. The study aims at exploring the concepts of governance, decentralization, development and empowerment in the Indian context. The exploratory part of the study is based on the content analysis and the review of literature on the empowerment issue. The study also aims at describing the actual state of decentralized governance in India and its impact on the overall process of empowerment of women in the country. Finally, the study is diagnostic as it aims at diagnosing the reasons contributing and hindering to the process of empowerment of women in India.

Survey method was adopted for collecting relevant informations on empowerment of women. The descriptive and diagnostic parts of the study have been covered through a field survey carried out among sample respondents consisting of women politicians and common women citizens of both the Scheduled castes and the Muslim communities in two selected blocks (Tufanganj-I and Haldibari) of Cooch Behar District. Thus the study involves two categories of respondents- the women politicians and common women citizens of the Scheduled castes and Muslims.

Under the present study, the concept of women politicians has been limited to the areas of local government who had taken part or aspired to take part in the policy making process for rural development, that is, the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

However, among the women Politicians, the sample includes the elected members of various Panchayati Raj Institutions of two selected blocks in the District and those who were defeated in the last Panchayat elections (These defeated candidates have been acted as elected members of different stages of Panchayat bodies prior to the last election.) A total number of 210 women politicians were interviewed under the survey.

Besides this, a sample of common women citizens of Scheduled Castes and Muslims were brought under survey to know their views on issues in regard to the empowerment of women. A total number of 110 sample common women citizens were interviewed under the survey.

The survey was conducted on the basis of a structured and unstructured schedule containing questions to elicit informations on Social, Political and economic aspects, which are treated as important parameters of empowerment. The schedules were pretested, finalized and then administrated to the selected sample respondents in two selected blocks of Cooch Behar district. However, the survey was supplemented by the insight of the investigator gained by him through observations while conducting the survey.

The selection of the sample respondents was both purposive and on probability. So far as the women politicians in the Panchayati Raj Institutions are concerned, the sampling was purposive so as to cover a large number of women. The selection of other sample respondents, namely, the common women citizens the sampling was on probability.

The selection of the district has been purposive as the district exhibits demographic relevance because a sizeable section of the inhabitants of the district belongs to the Scheduled Castes and Muslims. The selection of the blocks was also purposive because the level of development, demographic configuration, geographical location were considered in selecting the blocks. In total, two blocks were selected and studied, they are Tufanganj-I and Haldibari in the district of Cooch Behar of the state West Bengal.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTING THE DISTRICT:

At the very outset of the present study, discussion was made to select such a district which has a long and diversified history in regard to the district administration and which has been assimilated with the changing dimension caused by the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions in the workings of district administration.

The district of Cooch Behar was selected mainly on the following grounds:

1. Cooch Behar is the north-eastern frontier district of Jalpaiguri Division in the state of West Bengal. Geographically it lies internally in between the state of Assam and West Bengal. Externally, on the south and west it is covered by international border of Bangladesh. On the north side, though it is bounded by Jalpaiguri district, but the Indo- Bhutan border is not far away from the district headquarter. In view of the ongoing terrorist and secessionist activities in the region, the district has become a centre of discussion by the academicians, statesmen, as well as the researchers. Beside this, the migrants from Bangladesh have constituted a heavy influx to the number of total population as well as changed the socio- economic status of the people of the district, which calls for special administrative look out.

2. So far as the decentralized governance in the state is concerned, the district of Cooch Behar has attracted mostly for its selection. Even after the independence of India, the erstwhile feudatory state of Cooch Behar has been ruled by its Maharaja until the 28th day of August 1949. With effect from 12th September 1949, the state of Cooch Behar came under the preview of the Govt. of India and was ruled as a chief commissioner's Province by a chief commissioner appointed by the Govt. of India.

And finally, on 1st January 1950 it has been merged with West Bengal and became a district of it. The district was covered by Panchayati Raj system on 8th June 1960 by the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1957. Against this background of a changing country the whole fabric of the life and culture of the people had undergone a change, which needs careful study.

3. Cooch Behar is such a district where scheduled castes population is very high. It is also one of the districts having sufficient number of Muslim populations. The scheduled caste and Muslim people in this district mainly live in rural areas. And thus their economic conditions are not so high in comparison to other communities. In terms of literacy and education they are also lagging behind other communities. Particularly, the condition of women of both the communities are so weak economically and academically. On the other hand, Muslims are conservative, particularly in respect of women's empowerment. It is thought that the empowerment of women of both the scheduled castes and Muslim communities are less or limited. Hence a study of this district is more relevant and appropriate in terms of its demographic diversity and its impact on the overall developmental process in general and empowerment of women of weaker sections (S/Cs) and Muslims in particular.

Table- 1.1

4. Distribution of Area, Population, Sex Ratio and Literacy Rate of Cooch Behar District: -

Sl. No	District	Area (sq. Km)	Population	Sex Ratio	Literacy Rate
1.	Cooch Behar	3387	21, 71, 145	881	45.78
2.	Jalpaiguri	6227	28,00,543	843	45.09
3.	Darjeeling	3149	12,99,919	876	57.95
4.	West Dinajpur	5359	31, 27, 653	918	39.29
5.	Malda	3733	26, 37,032	1007	35.67
6.	Murshidabad	5324	47, 40, 149	1040	38.28
7.	Nadia	3927	38, 52, 097	1014	52.53
8.	24 Parganas (N)	4094	72, 81, 881	918	66.81
9.	24 Parganas (S)	9960	57, 15, 030	927	55.10
10.	Calcutta	185	43, 99,819	536	77.61
11.	Howrah	1467	37,29,644	935	67.62
12.	Hooghly	3149	43, 55, 230	983	66.78
13.	Midnapore	14081	83, 31, 912	1006	69.32
14.	Bankura	6882	28,05065	1032	52.04
15.	Purulia	6259	2224577	1011	43.29
16.	Burdwan	7024	60,50605	1004	61.88
17.	Birbhum	4545	25,55,664	1029	48.56
TOTAL	West Bengal	88752	680,77,965	945	57.70

Source: - Census of India, 1991.

The above distribution in Table 1.1 reveals that among 17 districts in West Bengal, Cooch Behar holds the rank of 13th position in respect of the distribution of area, 16th position in regard to population, 13th in woman ratio (sex ratio of women is 881 per 100 male). This position in sex ratio of the district attracted to make an indepth study on women's empowerment. In regard to literacy rate, the position of the district is 12th.

5. Belongingness of the researcher to the district of Cooch Behar is the pragmatic consideration for selecting the district. As the researcher belongs to the same district, it was thought that the collection of reliable and appropriate information on the question of empowerment of women of weaker sections and the Muslims would have been possible with the help of necessary insight about the district gathered by the researcher.

RATIONALE FOR SELECTING TWO BLOCKS OF TUFANGANJ-I AND HALDIBARI:

1. The two blocks, though economically backward like other blocks of the district, provide different geographical environment, and as such, call for special administrative care for the implementation for developmental programmes as well as empowerment of women.

2. The two blocks provide different social, cultural and linguistic background. The heavy influx on the population of Tufanganj-I after India's independence and after the emergence of independent Bangladesh, caused by immigration from Bangladesh and adjacent Assam, imposed influence on the socio-economic condition of Tufanganj-I Block. Linguistic and cultural behaviour pattern of the people of Tufanganj-I have also been partially influenced by the close cultural proximity with the cultures of adjacent Assam and Bangladesh.

3. On the other hand, the socio- economic and cultural behaviour pattern of the people of Haldibari block have largely been influenced by the close cultural proximity with the cultures of adjacent Jalpaiguri district and also partially with Bangladesh. From the point of view of higher education, business, transportation, earning and daily workings of the working class people of Haldibari block is mainly dependent on Jalpaiguri district, in general, and Jalpaiguri town in particular. The river Teesta flowing from north to south has divided Haldibari block totally from the mainstream of Cooch Behar district. For performing several government functions lying with district head- quarters the people of Haldibari block have to suffer innumerable sufferings. They have to halt at least one night at the district town spending a huge amount of money due to the long and troublesome distance of the block from its district headquarters. This has created a sense of isolation and separateness from the mainstream political culture of the district, in the minds of the people of the Haldibari block. This sense of isolation has compelled the people of Haldibari to depend on Jalpaiguri on every aspects of life. So, a socio- economic and cultural relationship of the people of this block has been established more with the people of Jalpaiguri

189322

15 FEB 2007



district than the people of the district of Cooch Behar. This was one of the considerations for selecting these two blocks.

4. Besides these, there were temporal and pragmatic financial and institutional considerations for selecting these two blocks. Haldibari blocks was nearer to the institution of the study and it was assumed that the closeness of the area of observation would lower the expenses of the field- survey to a considerable extent and also help to make the observation and investigation more authentic and precise. On the other hand, Tufanganj-I Block was the permanent residential area of the observer of this study which helped to assume that the belongingness of the researcher to this block would help him to make observation as well as collect information more reliably and efficiently and without expending a heavy amount for the purpose.

For the present study, out of the twelve Blocks in the district. Two Blocks, namely, Tufanganj-I and Haldibari have been selected as per their respective geographical feature and socio- economic culture. The profile of the two blocks is given below.

The TWO BLOCKS:

TUFANGANJ-I.

Tufanganj-I Block is located on the extreme east of the district headquarters. It is under Tufanganj Police- Station. Before 1983, it was an undivided Tufanganj Block- composed of 25 Gram Panchayats. In 1983, the Governor of West Bengal has been pleased to divide the unified Tufanganj Block into two separate Blocks- Tufanganj-I and Tufanganj-II. Tufanganj-I Block has been composed of 14 Gram Panchayats and Tufanganj- II composed of eleven Gram Panchayats. (Govt. of West Bengal, Notification No- 2672/1/ Panch- 10th February, 1983). Since then, Tufanganj-I Block has been composed of 14 Gram Panchayats, 73 villages and 73 Mouzas.

Tufanganj-I Block is located about ~~72~~ 72.5 Km away from the capital city (Kolkata) of West Bengal and 22 Km away from the district headquarters and Zilla Parishad. Its geographical location is very important. On the east it is partially bounded by Assam and partially by Tufanganj-II Block. On the south it is bounded by the international border of Bangladesh. From the block town, the distance of Bangladesh border varies only about 10 to 15 Km. On the north and west it is covered by the district of Jalpaiguri. The total geographical area of the Block is 194. 68 sq. Km. Total population of the Block as per as 2001 Census is 2,22, 856 which is scattered in 73 villages grouped under 14 Gram Panchayats. A heavy number of people migrated from adjacent district of Rangpur of Bangladesh, from the states of Assam, Bihar, Orissa and Rajasthan, and from the district of Jalpaiguri constituted an influx on the population figure of the block.

The economy of the block depends mainly on agriculture. The land is cultivated generally twice a year. But recently farming on winter vegetable, namely, potato, cauliflower, cabbage, green chili etc are being cultivated twice in a year. Some locally skilled trades are found in the block, namely Bidi making,

weaving, pottery, carpentry, Bamboo Craft and Bamboo Matting, Pati making etc. The main rivers of the block are Kaljani, Raidak, Gadadhar, Ghargharia etc. People of this block utilize mainly river water for irrigation. They also use modern technology in agricultural production. As the block is not in existence in the railway map of the district, the agricultural productions are not getting a better market outside the district. Non-availability of good transportation including railways, is one of the major causes of weak socio-economic condition of the Block. Tufanganj-I Block is culturally different with other parts of the district.

A good number of Scheduled castes population live in Tufanganj-I Block. A good number of Muslim people also live in this Block. A mixed number of socio-economic culture exist in this Block. People celebrate different cultural events in this Block. Religious festivals and fairs of both the Hindus and Muslims are the main cultural events. Among the festivals and fairs the 'shivratri' Mela (fair) of Chhoto Mahadevdham at Nakkatigach, the '12-Hat (18 ft) Kali' Mela (fair) of Chamta Baraitala of Nakkatigach, 'Ashtami Mela' of Natabari-I and Chilakhana-II, 'Dol Mela' of Tufanganj town are famous in the Block. Most of these fairs are organized once in a year for two to fifteen days and thousands of people gather at the fair from various places.

The researcher belongs to the village Nakkatigach of the Nakkatigach Gram Panchayat of this block.

The Block has a sub-divisional Hospital and a Mental Hospital, both are situated on the block town, Tufanganj.

TUFANGANJ-I BLOCK AT A GLANCE

A. GENERAL INFORMATION: -

1. Geographical Area (in sq. Km/Hec)	194.55 Sq.Km.
2. No. Of Gram Panchayat	14 Nos.
3. No. of villages	73 Nos.

B. POPULATION (AS PER 2001 CENSUS)

1. Total population	2,22,856
2. Male	1,13,688
3. Female	1,09,168
4. Total Scheduled Castes Population	1,23,428
5. Total Scheduled Tribes Population	210
6. No. of landless labourers	14,285
7. No of Bargadars	5,155
8. No. of patta holders	12,385
9. No. of Small Farmer families	5,825
10. No. of Marginal Farmers	13,395
11. % of BPL Families	41.98%

C. LAND USE (IN ACRES)

1. Net area under cultivation	22,451.65Hec
2. Home stead land	3,440 Hec
3. Area in which more than one crop is grown	21,600
4. Area of Vasted Land	3,827.95
5. Amount of land distribution	3,502.03

D. AGRICULTURE AND ALLIED ACTIVITIES**1. I. Minor cropping season: -**

i) Pre- Kharif Aus paddy, Jute	15,715 Hec
ii) Kharif, Aman paddy	20,215 Hec
iii) Rabi, wheat, muster-vegetable	12,348 Hec
iv) No. of Hats/ Regulated Markets	18

4. Veterinary Service: -

a) No. of Veterinary Hospital/ Dispensary	3
b) No. of Veterinary Surgeon	2
c) No. of A.I. Centre	7
d) No. of Veterinary Aid Centre	3
e) No. of Animal Devt. Aid Centre	14

5. FOREST (ACRES): -

a) Area covered by Social Forestry	506
b) No. of Beneficiaries	1251
I) Scheduled Castes	612
II) Scheduled Tribes	130
III) Others	507

6. ANIMAL HUSBENDRY

a) No. of Milky Cows	62,502
b) No. of plough animals	41,072
c) No. of Goats	39,472
d) Approx. No. of Poultry Birds	13,900

7. FISHERY (IN HECTARE)

a) Net water area	790
b) Net water area under effective pisciculture	500
c) No. of person engaged in profession	18,310
d) Approx. annual production (Qtl)	16,500

E. IRRIGATION

Net area under Irrigation (In Acres)

<u>Type of Facilities</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Area Benefited</u>
a) Canals	5	150
b) Tanks	752	3850
c) R.L.I.s	7	325
d) S.T.W.S	4	150
e) Others (hand Tube wells)	1500	350

F. INDUSTRY

a) No. of unit	685
----------------	-----

G. BASIC AMENITIES**1. DRINKING WATER SUPPLY:**

a) No. of village with spot sources	73
b) No. of village with pipe water supply	11 villages

2. EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION:

a) No. of Pry. School	153
b) No. of Secondary School	17
c) No. of Higher Secondary School	8
d) No. of Jr. High School	16
e) No. of College	1
f) No. of Libraries	11
g) No. of Adult education Centre	
h) No. of Continuing Education Centre	111
i) No. of Sishu Shiksha Kendras	93
j) Madhyamik Siksha Kendras	13
k) No. of Anganwari Centres	178

3. Health facilities

a) No. of B.P.H.C.	1
b) No. of P.H.C	3
c) No. of S.H.C.	34
d) No. of beds	24
e) No. of Mental Hospital	1
f) No. of Mental Practioners	4
i) Alopath-	1
ii) Homeopath-	1
iii) Ayurvedic-	1

4. <u>Power facilities</u>		
a) No. of Mouza electrified		70
b) No. of pump energized		85
5. <u>Pucca Buildings</u>		
a) No. of Community Buildings		2
b) No. of Pry. Schools		153
c) No. of Other educational Institution		4
d) No. of Dispensaries/ Health Care		34
e) No. of Panchayat Building		25
H. <u>ROAD AND TRANSPORT</u>		
a) Length of road (in Km)		625
b) Under PWD (roads)		70
c) Under Zilla Parishad (un-metalled)		19
d) No. of Payee Service		24
e) No. of Bus Route		6
f) Nearest railway Station from Block H.Q. Cooch Behar		25
g) Minimum distance from Raileway Station of Village	14 Km	
i) Maximum distance of Railway Station from village	42 Km	
I. <u>OTHER FACILITIES</u>		
a) No. of Post Office		29
b) No. of Bank Branches		10
c) No. of Co-operative Societies		42
J. <u>OTHER SOCIAL INDICATOR</u>		
a) No. of S. H. Gs		320
b) No. of Old Age Pensioners		112
c) No. of Widow Pensioners		30
d) No. of Disability Pensioners		21
e) No. of Destitute Children pensioners		12
f) No. of PROFLAL Beneficiaries		1342
K. <u>ELECTION DATA</u>		
a) No. of Assembly Constituencies		2
	<u>8 NO. A/C</u>	<u>9 NO.A/C</u>
b) Total Voter	93,077	49,566
i) Male	48,543	25,796
ii) Female	44,534	23,770
c) Total Polling Station	95	48
d) Total Premises	78	40
i) Single Premis	62	32
ii) Double Premise	15	8
iii) Triple Premise	1	—

HALDIBARI BLOCK

Haldibari Block is situated on the extreme west of the district head-quarter. It is under Mekhliganj Sub-division and Haldibari Police-Station. Haldibari Block is located about 475 Km (approx) away from the capital city (Kolkata) of West Bengal and nearly 150 Km away from district head-quarters and Zilla Parishad. Its geographical location is also very important. On the south and partially west side it is covered by the international border of Bangladesh. The distance of Bangladesh border from the block town varies only about 20 to 25 Kms. On the north it is bounded by Jalpaiguri district and on the east the river Teesta bifurcates the Block with Mekhliganj sub division and Mekhliganj Block.

The total geographical area of this Block is 159.48 sq. Km. Total population of this Block as per 2001 Census is 93,686 (Male 48,308 & Female 45,370) scattered in 58 inhabited villages grouped under 6 Gram Panchayats. Haldibari is comparatively a little Block in the district. Once the Block supported a good proportion of population per square mile. The Block had the second highest density of population in the district after Dinhata upto 1941. But due to emigration of a good number of people, particularly the Muslims, to the adjacent Bangladesh and for other reasons, Haldibari has been carrying a lesser load of population since 1941. (B.Ray, 1961). Now, according to 1991, census, the population density in the Block is only 521 Per Sq. Km.

The economy of the Block is mainly depends on agriculture. The Block has made remarkable progress in the cultivation of winter vegetables, particularly green chilly and tomato. The land is cultivated generally thrice a year. But lack of sufficient irrigation system is the main obstacle for the development of cultivation. The main river of the Block is Teesta. People utilize mainly river water for irrigation. The left hand canal system in the Block is not yet in progress. Most of the respondents expressed their demand for proper irrigation and drinking water system. Though the Block is connected by railway with other parts of the state, but the train service for carrying agricultural products are of very low. Availability of proper market for agricultural products is insufficient. So, the socio-economic condition of this Block is also very weak.

Muslims are in the highest proportion in the Haldibari Block in comparison to other Blocks of the district. According to the 2001 Census Muslims constitute 38% in Haldibari, the percentage is so high than the district's Muslim percentage of 23.34. A good number of Scheduled Caste population also live in Haldibari. According to 2001 Census, the S/C population in Haldibari is 61.69%

A mixed socio-economic and religious culture exist in this Block. Most of the Muslims of this Block are the disciples and devotees of 'Pirs' (Muslim saints) since a very long time. Throughout the Block there are so many 'Dargahs' and 'Majars' of such type of 'Pirs' or departed Sufi leaders. Many a number of 'Melas' or 'fairs' have been organized in the Block on the eve of birth anniversaries of these types of 'Pirs' or 'Hujurs'. Famous among them is 'Hujur Saheber Mela' happened every Bengali year on 5th and 6th Falguna on the Majar Sharif of Pir late Ekramul Haque Saheb at 'Melar Math' nearby Haldibari town. This is not only a Muslim festival. Lakhs of people of different communities from whole North

Bengal and adjacent other states come here every year to pay homage to the departed Guru. Socio-Cultural solidarity becomes very much strong among the Hindus and Muslims on the eve of the 'Hujur Saheber Mela' in the entire Block as well as the adjacent Jalpaiguri district.

Some other fairs (Melas) of this Block are – 'Bhandani Mela' at Beltali under Per Mekhliganj G.P., Chaitadevi Mela at Domanirdanga of Per Mekhliganj G.P., Jigashshari Mela of Hemkumari G.P., Nilahati Mela at Nilahati, under Hemkumari G.P., Jatiya Sanghati (National Integration) Mela at Ambagan under the Uttar Baro Haldibari Gram Panchayat etc.

HALDIBARI BLOCK AT A GLANCE

1. Population:

Item	Total	Male	Female
Population	93,686	48,308	45,370
(0-6) Population	17,538	8,828	6,710
Literate	46,801	28,675	18,126

2. Religion:

Religion	Hindu	Muslim	Others
	57,793	35,601	292

3. Classification of Workers:

Item	Total	Male	Female
Main Workers	25,917	23,702	2215
Marginal Workers	2727	1521	1206
Non Workers	65042	23093	41949
Cultivators	11,332	10,841	491
Agril. Labours	11,774	9,774	2,030
H.H.I.	558	236	322
Others	4,980	4,402	578

4. Population of SC & St.:

Item	Total	Male	Female
S.C.	55,194	28,869	26,325
S.T.	269	149	126

5. Information of Agriculturists:

Item	Numbers
No. of Small Farmers	3,941
No. of marginal Farmers	1,757
No. of Bargaders	10,302
No. of Patta Holders	3,615
No. of Agril. Holders	6,663
No. of Land Less Agril. Labours	6

6. General Informations:

Item	Numbers
Block Area	152.35 sq. Km
No. of Mouzas	62 nos
Inhabited Village	58 nos
Village with water facility	58 nos
Village with electrified	56 nos
No. of Gram Panchayats with telephone facilities	6 nos
Name of Rly. Station	Haldibari
No. of Office (Central Govt.)	3 nos
No. of Office (State Govt)	8 nos
Rural Hospital	1 no
S.H.C.	2 nos
I.C.D.S.	88 nos
Post Office	1 no
Branch Post Office	10 nos
Paca Roads (PWD)	35.5 Km
Paca Roads (Roads)	10 Km
No. of Bridge (PWD)	16 nos
No. of Bridge (Roads)	5 nos
River	2 nos, Area covered-41.64 acrs
Ponds	Vested-7 (50 acrs), Private-132 (55.45 acrs)

7. Educational Institutions:

Name of Items	Numbers
Shishu Shikha Kendra	22 nos
Pry. Schools	95 nos
Madrassa (Private)	56 nos
M.S.K.	3 nos (Running)
Jr. High School	4 nos
Higher Secondary Schools	2 nos
High Schools	6 nos
Continuing Education Centre (Nodal)	3 nos
Continuing Education Centre	23 nos
College	1 no

Tufanganj-I and Haldibari are dominated by the Hindus and Muslims respectively. Tufanganj-I is largely dominated by the Scheduled Castes. Of them, Rajbanshis constitute the major portion. Others are Namasudras, Jalia Kaibartas, Bagdis etc. Muslims are the second largest religious community in this Block. Though the religious beliefs and rituals are different, the people of this Block share almost identical socio-economic culture and political behaviour. The Muslims of this Block are mainly conservative. Haldibari Block is the largest Muslim dominated Block in the district of Cooch Behar. It has also a good number of Scheduled Castes population. Like Tufanganj-I, the people of both S/Cs and Muslims of this Block share almost identical socio-economic cultural heritage and political behaviour.

Table 1.2
Survey Area

District	Block	Gram Panchayat	Village-I	Village-II	Village-III	Village-IV	Village-V	Village-VI	Village-VII	Village-VIII
C O O C H B E H A R	P H A N S I I - J A N A G A C H	Natabari-I	Natabari	Chhat Barochowki	Debottar Charaljani	DwarikaMari	---	---	---	---
		Natabari-II	Jaigir Chilakhana	Charaljani	Bhelapeta	Bajejama Chilakhana Part-I	Bajejama Chilakhana Part-II	---	---	---
		Dhalpal-I	Dhalpal	Bhurkush	Chikliguri Part-I	Chikliguri Part-II	Shikdarer Khata	---	---	---
		Dhalpal-II	Balapukuri	Genduguri	Guriarpar	Chhatrampur Part-II	Chhat Jaigir Chilakhana Part-II	Bilshi Part-II	---	---
		Andaran Fulbari-I	Andaran Fulbari	Jamerdanga	Khorarpar	Chamta	---	---	---	---
		Andaran Fulbari-II	Bilshi Part-I	Chhalapak	Ghogerkuthi Part-II	Andaran Fulbari	---	---	---	---
		Chilakhana-I	Jaigir Chilakhana	Gobindapur	Chilakhana	Moamari	Amlaguri-II	---	---	---
		Chilakhana-II	Ghogerkuthi	Nowkhuli	---	---	---	---	---	---
		Maruganj	Bhelakopa Part-I	Bhelakopa Part-II	Maradanga	Sholadanga Part-I	Sholadanga Part-II			
		Balarampur-I	BalaramPur	Chhat Panishala	Nandidechra	Sharpa Shingda	---	---	---	---
		Balarampur-II	Shouldhukri	Sheoraguri	Shareyarpar	Kamat Sheoraguri	---	---	---	---
		Deocharai	Deocharai	Santoshpur	Balaghat	Nepalkhata	Jhaljhali	Krishnapur	Chengmari	Chowkushi BalaramPur
		Nakkatigachh	Nakkatigachh	DWiperpar	Dhodial	Rajarkuthi	Kamat Fulbari	Chamta	Shikarpur	
Balabhut	Balabhut	Jhowkuthi	Uttar Balabhut	Madhya Balabhut	Gopalerkuthi	---	---	---		

Continued Table – 1.2

C O O C H B E H A R	H A L D I B A R I	Uttar Baro Haldibari	Bara Haldibari (Part)	Bankanta	Uttar Chhoto Haldibari	---	---	---	---	---
		Dakshin Baro Haldibari	Bara Haldibari (Part)	Andaran Khasbosh (Part)	Boxiganj Andaran Khasbosh	Debottar Boxiganj	Paschim Hudum Danga	---	---	---
		Boxiganj	Basarajbala	Khasbosh	Pranmaj Umdar	Paschim Fate Mamud	Uttar Nijtaraf	---	---	---
		Dewanganj	Samilabash	Madhya Hudumdanga	Jnandas	Fatemamud	Jangalbash	---	---	---
		Hemkumari	Hemkumari	Dakshin Bajejama	Dakshin Samilabosh	Dakshin Basman Sighkumar	Golapdi	---	---	---
		Permekliganj	Daribosh	Jnankanta Adhikary	Nijtaraf	Daripattani	Jhar Singheswar	---	---	---

Source: - Block Development Offices of Tufanganj-I and Haldibari.

Table 1.2 and map show the selected Blocks, Panchayats and villages for the study. From the above listed two Blocks a total number of 20 Gram Panchayats. (14 GPs from Tufanganj-I and 6 GPs from Haldibari Block) were again selected. And finally a total number of 101 villages (73 from Tufanganj-I and 28 from Haldibari) were taken into account for the final field survey.

Table 1.3**Block- wise Descriptive Statistics:**

Blocks	Area in sq. Km	Population			No. of Villages	No. of House hold
		Male	Female	Total		
Tufanganj-I	194.68	1,13,688	1,09,168	2,22,856 **	73	39,679 *
Haldibari	159.48	48,308	45,378	93,686 **	58	+

Source: - Block Profile

Provided by Block Development offices of Tufanganj-I and Haldibari Blocks.

+ = Information not received

* = Census of 1991

** = Census of 2001

Table 1.3 shows the area (in sq. Km), population, number of villages and number of household of this study areas. Tufanganj-I has the highest number of 73 villages, whereas Haldibari Block has only 58 villages, the number is very less.

In area Tufanganj-I can be said to be larger Block than Haldibari. In population also, Tufanganj-I is much bigger than Haldibari. Tufanganj-I possessed more number of Houses, than Haldibari.

Table 1.4**Block- wise Literacy by Sex**

Sl. No	Blocks	Literacy Rate (%)		
		Male	Female	Total
1.	Tufanganj-I	56.68	31.74	44.61
2.	Haldibari	49.29	22.90	36.73

Source: - District Statistical Handbook, Cooch Behar, 2001, Govt. of West Bengal.

Table 1.4 shows that Tufanganj-I has maximum literacy rate of 44.61, as against of 36.73 of Haldibari. In regard to women literacy percentage Tufanganbj-I represents 31.74% whereas Haldibari shows only 22.90% of women literacy.

Table 1.5
Block-wise Break up of Occupation

Blocks	Main workers			Marginal workers			Non- Workers		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Haldibari	23,702	2215	25,917	1521	1206	2727	23,093	41949	65042
Tufanganj-I **	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Source: - Block profile of Haldibari Block, provided by office of the B.D.O., Haldibari and district statistical Handbook, Cooch Behar, 1993.

** Information of Tufanganj-I Block is not available.

Table: - 1.6

Block-wise Break up of Main Workers (in Percentage)

Blocks	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	House hold Industries	Other works	Total %
	Tufanganj - I *	13.61	8.19	1.47	6.61
Haldibari *	17.49	8.56	0.39	4.52	30.96

Source: - Census of India, 1991.

* - Distribution of Male and Female of main workers in not available.

Table: - 1.7

Block-wise percentage of Main Workers, Marginal Workers and Non-workers

Blocks	Main Workers	Marginal Workers	Non-Workers
Tufanganj - I *	29.88	1.63	68.49
Haldibari *	30.96	1.64	67.40

Source: - Census of India, 1991.

*- Male & Female distribution of Main, Marginal and Non Workers is not available.

CONTENTS OF THE SCHEDULE: -

The data for the present study has been obtained from two major sources, Primary and Secondary. The primary data consisted of personal interviews through questionnaire for sampled women members in Panchayati Raj Institutions, and common women citizens comprising of housewives, students, employees, daily workers, senior citizens, Panchayat leaders etc of both the Scheduled Castes and Muslim Communities.

Questionnaires were made in different form for these two types of respondents. For the women Politicians, questions were formed to get the socio- economic background of the respondents, their exposure to media, social, economic and political indicators of empowerment.

Section 'A' of the questionnaires includes demographic variables such as age, sex, religion, caste, qualification and occupation.

Section 'B' of the questionnaires covers their exposure to media, consciousness about local and national problems along with other informations concerning national interests.

Section 'C' of the questionnaires contains questions in regard to their- i) Social empowerment containing religious faith and limitation, social liberty enjoyed by them, and their position in family and society, ii) Economic empowerment containing their economic conditions, economic dependency on their male guardians, working ability and working condition of women. The second set of questionnaires was meant for common women citizens of S/Cs and Muslims. This set of questionnaire was also divided into three parts. Of them, Section 'A' and Section 'B' contained some questions on demographic variables of the respondents and their exposure to media respectively. Section 'C' dealt with questions regarding their views on women regarding their views on women in socio- economic and political aspect. Questions in the sections were framed on Likert's five point scale ranging from 'Strongly Agree', 'Undecided', 'Disagree', and 'Strongly Disagree'. The scales have been scored with 5,4,3,2, and 1 respectively.

DATA PROCESSING:

To draw the generalization and to come to a conclusion, all informations were analyzed by applying appropriate statistical tools. Mainly correlation analysis, the relationship both positive and negative between the variables of age, sex, education, income, religion, caste, occupation, work satisfaction (elected women Panchayat members only), level of awareness of empowerment in development process (women), level of acquired empowerment (women) in all the three aspects and ability of acceptance of such empowerment- have been measured. The intensity of orientation was scored by using different scales ranging from S.A., A, U.D., D.A., and S.D.A.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY:

The present study is not free from limitations. The limitations of this study can be discussed as follows: -

In the first place, the study has concentrated only on two Blocks that might not be sufficient for providing a general findings. However, this limitation, might not distort the findings in any way as the Blocks were selected in such a manner that it would be able to encompass the generic features of the Panchayati Raj Institutions of West Bengal.

Secondly, this study has dealt with only with a few important aspects of Panchayati Raj system. Some other important issues, like finance and audit of

Panchayat, their resources, and autonomy, and enactment on Panchayats etc has not been focused properly.

Thirdly, sufficient information has not been expressed by the respondents in relation to their lives and outside lives. In many cases, the male guardians of the respondents created obstacle to their female counterparts in answering questions of the investigator. In those cases, male guardians interacted with the investigator. In some cases, the respondents-cum-their male guardians raised question as to the justification or reliability of this type of study cum field survey.

REPORTS, DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES

Acharya Paromesh (1993), Panchayats and left Politics in West Bengal, Economic and Political weekly, May, 29, P.P. 1078-1083.

Ahmed, Syed Noman (2003), Globalization and Decentralized Development, Kurukshetra, July, P.P. 4-5.

Anandraj Kumar, P (1995), Multi Programme Approach to women's Economic Independence, Kurukshetra, vol. 43 (11), August, P.P. 72-77.

Andre Beteille (1999), Empowerment, Economic and Political weekly, March, vol. 6-13, P.P. 588-590.

Annual Action Plan (2004-2005), District Rural Development cell, Cooch Behar Zilla Parishad, Cooch Behar, P.P. 1-6.

Appleby, Paul. A. (1962), Some thoughts on Decentralized Democracy, the IJPA, vol. VIII (4), October- December, P.P. 441-444.

Arya Sadhana (1997), Uniform civil code controversy, challenges before the women's movement, trends in social Science Research, vol. 4(2), December, P.P. 34-44.

Azad, Nandini (1996), Gender and Equality: Experience of the working women's Forum, International Science Journal, vol. 48(2), June, P.P. 218-226.

Aziz, Abdul and David D. Arnold (1996), Decentralized Governance in Asian countries, New Delhi and London, Sage Publications, P.13.

Banerjee, N.K. (1995), Grass root Empowerment (1975-1990). A Discussion Paper, centre of women's Development studies, New Delhi, P.P. 3-6.

Basu, A.K. (1981), State-Panchayat Relations in West Bengal, Quarterly Journal of Local Self- Government Institute, vol. 51(4), April-June, P.P. 207-215.

Beevi, M. Fatima (1993), Muslim women: Problems and Prospects in Siddiqui and Zuberi (Ed), Muslim women, Problems and Prospects, New Delhi, Anmol Publications P.P. 6-8.

BhagyaLakshmi, J (2004), Women's Empowerment: Miles to go, Yojana, vol. 48, August, P.P. 38-39.

Bhargava S and K.C. Vidya (1992), Position of women in Political Institutions, Journal of Rural Development, vol. 11(5), P.R. 600-620.

Bhargava, B.S. and Subha H (1995), Political Empowerment of women through Decentralized Institutions (Panchayati Raj Institutions) in Karnata Panchayat Sandesh, vol. 35(3-4), June-July-P.P. 4-9.

Bhaskar, Manu (1993), Women and Political consciousness in women's participation in Politics, in Indian Association for women's Studies (Ed. by Susheela Kaushik), New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Limited, P.P. 70-75.

Biju, M.R. and J.N. Panda (1991), Democratic Decentralization in an Indian State, Kerala, The Indian Journal of Political Science, vol. 52(3), July-September, P.P. 405-415.

Census of India (1951), District Handbook, Cooch Behar.

Census of India (1961), District Handbook, Cooch Behar.

Chakraborty, Banhi (2005), Decentralization of power: A case of women Empowerment in Decentralized Planning and Participating Rural Development, Ed. by P.S. Das, New Delhi, concept Publishing company, P. 131.

- Chakraborty, Debesh (1980)**, Panchayati Raj and Decentralization of Power, Social Scientist Journal, vol. 9(5 & 6), December-January, P.P. 70-76.
- Chaudhury, Kameshwar (1998)**, Model of Empowerment, Trends in Social Science Research, vol. 5(1), June, P.P. 65-70.
- Chaudhury, Rabindra (1997)**, Gender Equality, Indian Journal of Politics, vol. xxxi(1 & 2), P.P. 114-124.
- Chauhan, Abha (1998)**, Women in Politics, women's Link, vol.4 (2), April- June, P.P. 12-19.
- Crook, Richard, C (1998)**, Democracy and Decentralization in South Asia and West Africa, London, Cambridge University Press, P.P. 292-310.
- Dar, R.K. (1995)**, Panchayati Raj Institutions and Decentralized Planning- Some Emerging Issues, Panchayat Sandesh, vol. 35, August, P.P. 5-12.
- Das, Partha Sarathi (1991)**, Role of Zilla Parishads in Rural Development: A study of Cooch Behar and Jalpaiguri District of North Bengal, Ph.D. Thesis, North Bengal University.
- Dasgupta, Biplab (1989)**, Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, Kurukshetra, vol. 37 (5), February, P.P. 58-65.
- Dasgupta, Tapati (2005)**, Women Empowerment for Functional Efficiency in Decentralized Planning at Bottom Level, in Decentralized Planning and Participatory Rural Development Ed. by P.S. Das, New Delhi, concept Publishing Company, P. 130.
- Datta, Prabhat (1995)**, Village Self- Government in Post- colonial India, Kurukshetra, vol.43 (7), April, P.P. 48-58.
- Datta Prabhat (1997)**, Political Empowerment of Rural women in India, Administrative change, vol.24 (2) Jan-June, P.P. 128-145.
- Deshpande, Nirmala (1998)**, Participation of women in Political system, Kurukshetra, vol. 37 (5), Feb, P.P. 55-58.
- District Statistical Handbook (1993)**, Cooch Behar, Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Govt. of West Bengal.
- District Statistical Handbook (2001)**, Cooch Behar, Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Govt. of West Bengal.
- Dubashi, P.R. (1970)**, Rural Development Administration in India, Bombay, Popular Prakashan, P.P. 106-118.
- Ensminger, Douglas (1961)**, Democratic Decentralization; A New administrative challenge, Indian Journal of Public Administration, vol. 7(3), July- September, P.P. 285-295.
- Escobar, Arituro (2000)**, Beyond the Search for a Paradigm? Post development and beyond, in Development, vol. 43(4), P.P. 11-14.
- Ganguly, Nirmal (1989)**, Panchayati Raj and Decentralization, Kurukshetra, vol. 37(5), Feb, P.P. 47-54.
- Ghosh, Arabinda (1997)**, Inside- outside Dichotomy in Panchayati Raj Institutions in West Bengal, The Administrator, vol. XL-11(4), October-December, P.P. 1-12.
- Guha, A.K. (1980)**, The Politics of Panchayati Raj Administration, Political change, vol.111 (1), January-June, P.P. 120-126.
- Gupta, Bharat Bhushan (1968)**, Democratic Decentralization in India, Quarterly Journal of Local Self- Govt. Institution, vol. 38(4), April-June, P.P. 402-410.

- Hape, Holly M (1992)**, An Experiment in Empowerment, Women in Decision-Making, Ed. by Ranjana Kumari.
- Hooja, Bhupendra (1980)**, Let Panchayat do all Development work, Kurukshetra, vol. 28(21), August, P.P. 3-8.
- Hoogvelt, Ankie (1997)**, Globalization and the Post-colonial world. The New Political Economy of Development, Houndmills, Macmillan Press.
- Information on West Bengal Panchayats (1999)**, Govt. of West Bengal, State Institute of Panchayats and Rural Development, Kalyani, Nadia, West Bengal.
- Islam, Md. Najrul (2005)**, Decentralization, Transparency, Social capital and Development, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, P.P. 34-36.
- Jandhyala, Kameshwari (1998)**, Women, Empowerment and the state. Indian Journal of Social work, vol. 59(1), January, P.P. 190-208.
- Joshi Uma (1995)**, Rural women in National development, Kurukshetra, vol. 43(11), August, P.P. 35-40.
- Kaushik Susheela (1993)**, Women and Panchayati Raj, New Delhi, Har Anand Publication, P.P. 174-175.
- Kaushik, Susheela (1993)**, Women's Participation in Politics, Indian Association for Women's Studies, New Delhi, Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd, P.P. Viii- Xv.
- Key Statistics of the District of Cooch Behar (1999 & 2000)**, Govt. of West Bengal, Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Cooch Behar.
- Key Statistics of the District of Cooch Behar (2001)**, Govt. of West Bengal, Bureau of Applied Economics and Statistics, Cooch Behar.
- Kishwar, Madhu (1996)**, Women and Politics, Beyond Quotas, Economic and Political Weekly, vol. xxi (13), October, 26, P.P. 2866-68.
- Kothari, Rajari (1997)**, Perspective on Decentralization, Journal on Rural Development vol. 10(5), P.P. 496-505.
- Kumar, Sharat (1997)**, Panchayati Raj and Perspective Planning, Kurukshetra, vol. 45(10), July.
- Kumar, Sunil (1997)**, Towards People's Participation in Economic Development. Trends in Social Science Research, vol.3 (1), June, P.P. 90-95.
- Lieten, G.K. (2001)**, Development Priorities. Pre-Modernist Assumptions and Pre-Modernist Aspirations, Asian Journal of Social Sciences, vol. 29. P-3.
- Lieten, C.K. (2002)**, Faltering Development and the Post-Modernist Discourse, Social Scientist, vol.30 Nos. 7-8, July-August, P.P. 68-73.
- Linda, M.G. Zerilli (1998)**, Doing without Knowing, Political Theory, vol. 26(40), August, P.P. 434-456.
- Lucky, T.V. (1995)**, Empowerment of women for Sustainable Development. Social Action, vol. 45(20), April-June, P.P. 223-228.
- Maddick, Henry (1975)**, Democracy Decentralization and Development. New York, Asia Publishing House, P.P. 22-27.
- Mahi Pal (1994)**, Empowering women through Panchayati Raj Institutions, Kurukshetra, vol. 42(9), June, P.P. 28-35.
- Majumder, Durgadas (1977)**, West Bengal District Gazetteers, Koch Bihar, Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta, P.P. 1-2.
- Mishra, Baidyanath (1996)**, Powers, Functions and Finances of the Panchayats, Kurukshetra, vol.44 (7), April, P.P. 28-32.

- Mishra, Sweta (1994)**, Land Reforms and Empowerment of Women, Kurukshetra, vol. 43(1), P.P. 110-115.
- Mishra, Sweta and S.N. Mishra (1995)**, Women and Political Process in India, Kurukshetra, vol. 43(11), August, P.P. 38-45.
- Mitra, A (1951)**, District Handbooks, Cooch Behar, Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta.
- Mitra, Jyoti (1999)**, Women and Society, Equality and Empowerment, New Delhi, Kaushika Publication.
- Mohanty, Vidyut (1995)**, Panchayati Raj, 73rd Constitutional Amendment and women, Economic and Political Weekly, December, 30, P.P. 32-47.
- Mohanty, Manoramjan (1995)**, On the concept of Empowerment, E.P.W., vol. xxx (24), June, 17, P.P. 1433-1435.
- Mukherjee, Neela (1994)**, Rural women and Panchayati Raj Institutions, Kurukshetra, vol.42(9), P.P. 8-12.
- Muttalib, M.A. and Md. Akbar Ali Khan (1982)**, Theory of Local Government New Delhi, sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. P.P. 2-11.
- Muthamma, C.b. (1996)**, Empower the People. Mainstream, vol.34 (37), 26th October, P.P. 6-9.
- Narain, Iqbal (1963)**, Democratic Decentralization and Rural Leadership in India. Asian Survey, vol.4 (8), August, P.P. 1012-1022.
- Narayan, Usha (1999)**, Women's Political Empowerment, Imperatives and challenges, Mainstream, vol.37 (16), April, 1, P.P. 6-10.
- Norman Uphoff (1986)**, Local Institutional Development, Connecticut, Kumarian Press, P.P. 220-222.
- Oomen, M.A. (1997)**, Decentralized Planning and Resource Transfer to Local Bodies, Kurukshetra, vol.45(9), June, P.P. 12-22.
- Office of the District Magistrate, Cooch Behar (2003)**, Panchayat General Election, 2003, Cooch Behar.
- Office of the Block Development Officer (2005)**, Haldibari Block, Block Profile (2005), Govt. of West Bengal, Haldibari, Cooch Behar.
- Padmaja, G (1997)**, Village Level Planning and Sustainable Development. Kurukshetra, vol. 45(9), June, P.P. 44-48.
- Padmakar, PLDV (1998)**, Panchayati Raj, a look back, Kurukshetra, vol.46(2), Number, P.P. 2-5.
- Pathy, Jagannath (1980)**, Panchayati Raj and Decentralization of Political Power, Social Scientist, vol.8 (9), P.P. 33-42.
- Pattanaik, B.K. (1997)**, Empowerment of women and Rural Development, Yojana, October, P.P. 22-28.
- Peet, R and Harwick (1999)**, Theories of Development, New York, Guilford Press.
- Prasad, Kamta (1990)**, People's Participation in Rural Development, Yojana, vol.30 (14-15) August, 15, P.P. 14-18.
- Prasad, Nageshwar (1986)**, Decentralization in Historical Perspective, Allahabad, Vohra Publications, P.P. 86-89.
- Prasad, R.R. (2002)**, Participation and Empowerment: Rhetorics and Realities, Kurukshetra, vol.50, No. 7, May, P-6.

- Purushothaman, Sangeeta (1998)**, The Empowerment of women in India, New Delhi, Sage Publications, P.P. 116-124.
- Rahaman, Md Habibur (1989)**, Decentralization: in search of a Theoretical Framework, Administrative change, vol.xvi(2), Jan-June, P.P. 114-122.
- Rahaman, Khalilur (2001)**, Democratic Decentralization and Empowerment of women, Ph.D. Thesis, University of North Bengal, July, 18, 2001.
- Raj, Preethi (1995)**, Democracy and women, New Delhi, Anand Raj Publications Pvt. Ltd.
- Rajendra, T. and B. Kumaresan (1998)**, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development, 73rd Amendment, Kurukshetra, vol.46 (7), April, P.P. 54-62.
- Raju, M.Naga (1999)**, Panchayati Raj in Tripura, Kurukshetra, vol.47 (7), April, P.P. 10-14.
- Ram, Ahuja (1992)**, Rights of women, Jaipur, Rawal Publications, P.P. 1000-1003.
- Ramachandran, V (1993)**, Panchayati Raj in the coming years. The Administrator, vol.xxxviii. October- December, P.P.1-7.
- Ramathilagan, G (1995)**, The 73rd Constitutional Amendment and its implications for women. Kurukshetra, vol.43 (7), April, P.P. 92-98.
- Ranga, Rao, S.P. (1998)**, Autonomy- The Essence of Panchayati Raj. Kurukshetra, vol.46 (7), April, P.P. 26-35.
- Rao, B. Meena and M. Vijayalakshmi (1997)**, Women and Development, Rhetoric and Reality. Mainstream, vol.35, March, 15, P.P. 24-28.
- Rao, Nitya (1996)**, Empowerment through organization: Women workers in the Informal Sector, Indian Journal of Gender Studies, vol.3 (2), July-December, P.P. 170-198.
- Rao, P.V. Narashima (1993)**, Democratic Discipline. Must for success of Constitution (73rd Amendment), Act, 1992. Kurukshetra, vol.41 (12), P.P. 22-27.
- Ray, B (1961)**, District Census Handbook Cooch Behar, Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta.
- Reddy, R. Gangadhar (1998)**, Panchayati Raj. The Challenge Ahead. Kurukshetra, Vol.46 (2), November, P.P. 12-16.
- Rishi, Parul (1997)**, Women and the Environment, from empowerment to sustainable development, Kurukshetra, vol.45 (4 & 5), Jan-Feb, P.P. 51-56.
- Rist, Gilbert (1996)**, Le Development, Historic d'une croyance occidentale, Paris, Presse de Sciences.
- Roy, M. Sam (1995)**, Emerging Panchayat Leadership and Polarization of Political Power at Grass root Level, Journal of Rural Development, vol.14 (4), Hyderabad, NIRD, P.P.340-357.
- Sabri, Mazhar Ali (1998)**, Participation in rural women in Socio-Economic Development, Kurukshetra, vol.46 (3), Dwewmbwr, P.P. 14-30.
- Sahay, Sushama (1998)**, Women and Empowerment: Approaches and Studies, New Delhi, Discovery Publishing House, P.P. 21-22.
- Saran, S.V. (1993)**, Women in Panchayats Yojana, vol.37 (16), September, 15, P.P. 5-10.
- Sarkar, Abu Elias (1991)**, New Public Management in Bangladesh, chasing a Mirage, Social Scientist, vol.30, July-August, P.P. 153-169.

- Sarkar, Abu Elias (1991)**, State Intervention in Rural Development, A case Study of Bangladesh, Unpublished Ph.D Thesis, University of Liverpool, U.K., 1991.
- Sassen, Saskia (1998)**, Globalization and its discontent, New York, The New Press.
- Satyanarayam, T (2003)**, Good Governance for Sustainable Development: A Study of People's Institutions in Rural Andhra Pradesh, vol.xxx No.2 & vol.xxxi, No.1, Jan-Dec, P. 33.
- Saxena, Kiran (1994)**, Empowerment of women, The Indian context, The Indian Journal of Political Science, vol.55 (4), Oct-Dec, P.P. 370-390.
- Scholte, Jan Aart (2000)**, Globalization, A critical Introduction, Houndmills, Macmillan.
- Sellamna, Nour-Eddine (1999)**, Relativitism in Agricultural Research and Development. Is Participation a Post-Modern concept? London, overseas Development Institute, working Paper, P.119.
- Sen, Aditya (1999)**, A Review of Women's Role in Panchayati Raj, Kurukshetra, vol.42 (4), P.P. 60-64.
- Sen, Soren, Eva (1997)**, Democracy and Empowerment, Public Administration, vol.75 (3), Auttemen, P.P. 552-557.
- Shah, Ghanasham (1987)**, Grass root Mobilization in Indian Politics in women, in Rural Development, Ed. by Satnam Kaur, Delhi, Mittal Publications, P.P. 260-290.
- Sharma, Kumud (1991-92)**, Grass root organization and women's Empowerment. Some issues in the contemporary Debate, Sevmya Shakti, vol.6, New Delhi.
- Singharay, Debal Kumar (1998)**, Grass root Mobilization and Sustainable Social Transformation for Gender-Equality, in Sociology Faculty, IGNOU.
- Singh, Hoshier (1995)**, Administration of Rural Development in India, New Delhi, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd. P.P. 70-75.
- Singh, Mahinder (1997)**, Rural Development through Decentralized Planning. Kurukshetra, vol.45 (9), June, P.P. 26-30.
- Singh, Shrawan Kumar (1994)**, Rajiv Gandhi and Panchayati Raj Institutions, Yojana, vol.38 (13), July P.P. 16-20.
- Souvenir, Silver Jubilee Year (1990)**, Cooch Behar Zilla Parishad, Cooch Behar.
- Souvenir, Tufanganj-I Panchayat Samiti (1998)**, Tufanganj, Cooch Behar.
- Souvenir, Platinum Jubilee Year (1990)**, P.V.N.N. Library, Haldibari, Cooch Behar.
- Subha, K (1995)**, Training: An Aid to Empower Rural Women Leaders. Kurukshetra, vol.43 (7), P.P. 96-100.
- Sundaram, Satya (1997)**, Essentials of Decentralized Planning, Kurukshetra, vol.45 (9), June, P.P. 30-35.
- Thaplial, B.K. (1990)**, Decentralized Planning concept, Scope and Methodology. Journal of Rural Development, vol.9 (6), P.P. 994-1012.
- Subrahmanyam, Dr. K. Silva (2002)**, Empowerment of women and Marginalized Groups in Panchayats, Kurkshetra, May, P.28.
- The Calcutta Gazette (1978)**, Regd No. WB/ SC-132 No. 367 (1), Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta, July, 18, P.P. 1208-1213.
- The Calcutta Gazette (1980)**, Regd. No. WB/ SC-247 No. 199 (1), Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta, May, 20, P.P. 769-775.
- The Calcutta Gazette (1998)**, Regd. No. WB/ SC-247, No. WB/DPT/Pt-I/CPS/98/4226, Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta, July, 10, P.P. 17-22.

The Calcutta Gazette (1998), Regd. No. WB/ SC-247, No. WB (Pt-I)/98/SAR-271, Govt. of West Bengal, Calcutta, July, 20, P.P. 5-6.

The Kolkata Gazette (2003), Regd. No. WB/SC-247, No. WB (Pt-I)/2003/SAR/186, Govt. of West Bengal, Kolkata, June, 23, P.P. 1-14.

Thimmaih, G (1998), Democratic Decentralization from India, Man and Development, P.P. 84-92.

Turner, Terence (1997), Human Rights, Human Difference, Anthropology's contribution to an emancipatory cultural Politics. In Journal of Anthropological Research, vol.53 (3), P.P. 273-291.

Valsen, E. H. (1970), Community development programmes and rural local government, comparative case studies of India and Philippines, New York, Progress Publishers, 1970.

Viswanathan, Sujatha (1997), Grouping women for Economic Empowerment, Yojana, March, P. P. 35-45.

Vital, C. P. (1998), Devolution of Powers and functions to Panchayati Raj Institutions. Kurukshetra, Vol. 46(2), November, P. P. 7-13

Wilkinson, Susan (1990), Agents of Empowerment and change. A case study of Mahila Mandals, Uttham, Mahiti Gender and Development, Oxford University Press.

Yasin, M (1990), Administrative Reform for Rural Development: A Study of Two Districts of North Bengal, Ph. D. Thesis, North Bengal University, Darjeeling.

Yasin, M, S. Dasgupta, and P. K. Sengupta (2002-2003), Decentralized governance and Empowerment of women: The West Bengal Experience, ISDA Journal, Vol. 12 (4) & 13 (1), P. 310.