

**PERFORMANCE OF PANCHAYATS IN RESPECT TO
RURAL DEVELOPMENT : A STUDY OF A
BACKWARD DISTRICT, COOCH BEHAR.**

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ABBREVIATION

B.D.O	- Block Development Officer
B.P.L.	- Bellow The Poverty Line
B.J.P.	- Bharatiya Janata Party.
C.D.P.	- Community Development Programme.
CPI(M)	- Communist Party of India (Marksist)
CPI	- Communist Party of India
Cong.(I)	- Congress (Indira).
D.M.	- District Magistrate.
D.P.C.	- District Planning Committee.
D.R.D.A.	- District Rural Development Agency.
D.Y.F.I.	- Democratic Youth Federation of India.
G.P.	- Gram Panchayat.
H.S.	- Higher Secondary.
I.C.D.S.	- Intregrated Child Development Scheme.
I.N.C.	- In dian National Congress.
I.R.D.P.	- Intregrated Rural Development Programme
I.A.Y.	- Indira Awas Yojana.
J.R.Y.	- Jawahar Rojgar Yojana.
J.S.G.Y	- Jawahar Gram Samriddhi Yojana
L.F.	- Left Front
L.F.G.	- Left Front Government.
M.L.A.	- Member of Legislative Assembly.
M.P.	- Member of the Parliament.
M.W.S.	- Million Well Scheme
N.I.R.D.	- National Institution of Rural Development.
O.D.P.	- Outline of Development Plan.
P.R.I.	- Panchayati Raj Institution.

- R.S.P.** - Revolutionary Samajbadi Party.
S.C. - Scheduled Caste.
S.F.D.A. - Small Farmer Development Association.
S.G.S.Y. - Swarnajayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana
S.L.C.C. - State Level Co-ordination Committee
S.T. - Scheduled Tribe.
S.U.C. - Socialist Unity Centre.
T.M.C. - Trinomul Congress.
U.F.G. - United Front Governement.

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Chapter-1

Introduction

a. General Outline:

Rural development has been engaging the attention of the Indian leadership even before Independence. The goals of development in general and rural development in particular have been enshrined in the constitution and Five Year Plans.¹ The constitution has laid down the goal in terms of building a socialist, secular and democratic society. In order to realise these goals it became necessary to devise institutional mechanisms, mobilise resources (both human & material) and transform existing institutional structures and value patterns with a view to build a new social and economic order based on the values of equality, freedom and justice. Thus it became necessary to simultaneously initiate two processes-one for reorienting and if necessary, even restructuring existing institutional structures and, secondly of building new institutional structures which could provide a base for the accomplishment of new goals.

The philosophy of development that emerged in India after Independence emphasised the involvement of the people into a structure that would enable them to actively participate in the process of decision making. The introduction of the Community Development Programme (CDP) in the first five year plan (1951) gave a new dimension as well as impetus to the participation of people in development process. But CDP failed to fulfill the expectations because of non-association of people and their representatives in the planing and execution of development schemes. Moreover, resources available for the programmes were too meager compared with the need and spread too thin for any significant achievement². The Balwantrai Mehta Committee, has therefore, strongly recommended the establishment of statutory elective local bodies and devolution to them of the necessary,

resources, power and authority to plan and implement the development programmes under a major institutional device which has come to be popularly, known as 'Panchayat Raj System' or 'democratic decentralisation'³. The committee also recommended three tier model of Panchayat Raj to same as instrument of development from below. The system is one of the important political innovations of the independent India. It was hoped to provide a bold and imaginative leadership for the all round development of the countryside. The system was conceived to and set up as an instrument of change and transformation.

b. Conceptual Distinction.

In the context of third world country like ours, 'economic development' essentially means rural development. The definition 'rural' is residuary because all over the world, what is defined is an urban area and whatever is not urban is known as rural. In India, a settlement is defined as urban if it fulfils either of the following conditions: (a) the place should enjoy a statutory label of local government administration corporation municipality, notified area etc. (b) the following three-item-test should be simultaneously satisfied:

- (i) a population of at least 5000;
- (ii) a density of at least 400 persons per square Kilometer;
- (iii) at least $\frac{3}{4}$ s of working males should be engaged in non-agricultural occupation.

Thus, places which do not satisfy the conditions either (a) or (b), fall into rural category⁴.

The term 'rural' essentially means an area, which is characterized by non-urban style of life, occupational structure, social organisation and settlement pattern. As Mishra and Sundaram put it "Rural is essentially agricultural, its settlement system consists of villages or homesteads; socially it connotes greater interdependence among people, more deeply rooted community life and a slow moving rhythm of life built around nature and natural phenomenon; and occupationally it is

highly dependent on crop farming, animal enterprises, tree crops and related activities'⁵.

The word 'development' carries a wide variety of meanings. In our context development means "an activity or a series of activities or a process which either improves the immediate living conditions-economic, social, political, cultural and environmental, or increase the potential for future living or both".⁶

Now the term "rural development" has also been viewed from different perspectives by various scholars, sociologists, social scientists and institutions, Copp⁷ has defined it a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the well-being and self-realisation of people living outside the urbanised areas. He further contends that the ultimate target of rural development is people and not infrastructure and according to him one of the objectives of rural development should be to "widen people's ranges of choices". The efforts should be towards preservation and improvement of the rural environment and rural development planning may be conceived of identifying the complex of factors, which contributes to the creation change or development of a rural area or community.

A more comprehensive concept and method of rural development has been suggested by the World Bank. Rural development has been defined as a strategy to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people i.e the rural poor including small and marginal farmers, tenants and the landless. The report of the Bank says, "A national programme of rural development should include a mix of activities including projects to raise agricultural output., create new employment, improve health and education, expand communication and improve housing.... The nature and content of any development programme or project will reflect the political, social and economic circumstances of the particular country or region...."⁸

In the same sequence of thinking, 'rural development' world essentially mean desired positive change in the rural areas--- both in a quantitative as well as a qualitative sense. Thus rural development is an area concept. It is a complete term which integrates a variety of human life and activities which can broadly be classified into the broad dimensions of social, economic, technological and natural. Rural development means desired changes in all these dimensions. But such changes should take place in mutually supporting relationships so as to generate organic and optimum development. Organic development is one, which maintains healthy relationships among the various components of a system.

c. Panchayats and Rural Development:

The role of panchayat Raj institution as instrument of rural reconstruction and development needs no emphasis. They have been recognised with under powers and financial resources not merely as institution of political participation but institution of social and economic development. It is a commonly held view that local development administration is married to such institution. It is not an end in itself:- it is a means of rural development⁹. Firstly it is a government by itself and secondly it is an agency of the state government. In West Bengal the Left Front government pushed up the process of decentralised planning responsibilities to the grass root level through the panchayat frame work. These institution have to discharge the responsibility of planning implementation and monitoring all rural development programme in the country side involving rural people in power structure in decision making process. In the integrated exercise of planning for social and economic development programme assume exceptional significance. These bodies have both co-operating and co-ordination roles. The present set up is a three tier representative structure of government where the administrator, elected leaders and local population participate in the development effort. In fact, the elected representatives play the key role

in power structure and decision making process. Leaders are regarded as facilitator of the process of development policies in bringing about peoples participation in the development programme. It is possible to achieve through the leader¹⁰. The administrators are expected to participate with missionary zeal in the life and development of the villages. These institutions are to be galvanized to become effective instruments of social and economic change.

d. Statement of the Problem:

Some agents are considered to be catalyst of development. The district, Cooch Behar of North Bengal is a poor and backward. Cooch Behar is a no industry district, its per capita income is lower than both state average; its rate of urbanisation is lower than both State and all India average; per capita road Kilometer infrastructure is one of the lowest in India, communication system is extremely primitive; railway lines have a poor mileage; it has a large scheduled caste population; the proportion of scheduled caste population is higher than the West Bengal State average; infant mortality rate is higher than state average. A high proportion of working population is engaged in agriculture and bulk of them are marginal farmers, small farmers, agricultural labourers. Irrigation facilities, electricity consumption are highly inadequate and much lower than the state average, cropping pattern discloses the increasing preponderance of food crops. So the district symbolises the poverty and backwardness of India in all its manifestations.

In the light of such various constraints to economic development our study has focussed the performances of Panchayat in respect to rural development with special reference to backward district, Cooch Behar. Moreover, in course of functioning of the panchayat raj system in the country for the past long years, doubts have been expressed on the effectiveness and efficacy of these institutions in the work of rural development. So our study seeks to reveal the actual picture of the region.

e. Approach and Objective of the Study:

Though several studies have been made about the panchayat raj institutions on different South Bengal districts in West Bengal, but no one has focussed attention on the role of these bodies as institution for promoting economic development of North Bengal districts particularly Cooch Behar in West Bengal. The present study regarding performance of panchayats in respect to rural development of a backward district Cooch Behar is in depth in nature covering all possible aspects. The present study will definitely add a new dimension to the existing field of knowledge. It would be useful for both academic and practical purposes.

The main objectives of the present study are:

- i) To present the over all picture of PR in West Bengal.
- ii) To study the operation of Panchayat Raj in Cooch Behar district focussing on two gram panchayats in particular.
- iii) To study caste, class and power structure of the panchayat members in the district.
- iv) To study panchayat resources and pattern of expenditure on development activities in the district of Cooch Behar.
- v) To assess the role of panchayats and poverty alleviation programmes on rural economy of Cooch Behar.

f. Review of Literature:

An attempt is made here to review studies and their findings, which have a close bearing on the present study.

Harichandran (1983)¹¹ made a study in the state of Tamilnadu which highlighted the relation between financial resources of panchayat and rural development. Rao (1980)¹² in his study of gram panchayat in Tumkur in the district of Karnataka State revealed that only upper economic classes among the dominant social groups captured the power in panchayat. Biju (1998)¹³ undertook a study in the state of Kerala who presented comprehensively an overall picture of P.R.I.

Ommen and Dutta (1993)¹⁴ conducted a study on P.R.I. on finance in the state of Himachalpradesh, Karnataka, U.P. Lieten and Srivastava (1999)¹⁵ undertook a study on the role of Panchayat on anti Poverty Programme, Power structure in the state of Uttarpradesh. B.S. Bargava (1979)¹⁶ in his study in the state of Karnataka highlighted the caste composition and financial relation with respect to rural development. In an interesting study in the state of Gujrat Chokshi (1971)¹⁷ found neither that the Panchayats were functioning satisfactorily nor that the resources were adequate for those bodies. There is one in-depth study by Muthayya (1972)¹⁸ on Panchayat taxes with particular reference to a few Panchayats in Andhrapradesh.

Shivaih et al (1976)¹⁹ made a comprehensive and objective analysis of the nature and working of P.R.I. which is an analytical survey not a comprehensive study. An attempt was made by Punekar and Golwalkar²⁰ to find out the impact of community development and Panchayati Raj Programme in the process of rural growth in the state of Maharastra. Pandya (1984)²¹ in his study analysed the role of leadership and development in Panchayati Raj in the Kheda district of Gujrat.

Darshankar (1979)²² made an authentic study on leadership in Panchayati Raj in the Beed district of Maharastra. Saha and Pandya (1989)²³ conducted an elaborate study, which highlighted the recent development of P.R. Rai et al (2001)²⁴ made an attempt to provide an overview of the past, present and future of Panchayat considering the areas like devolution of power and functions, participation of women and other marginalised sections in the state of M.P. Rajasthan, Gujrat, U.P., Kerala, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Orissa. An indepth study was made by V.G. Nandedkar (1979)²⁵ who analysed the role of Zilia Parishad as local government and development body. In an interesting study Chaturvedi²⁶ observed that the resources of Panchayati Raj bodies were meager when compared to functions assigned to them.

The joint report by Mukherji & Bandyopadhyay²⁷ (1993) highlighted so many nobilities of Panchayat Raj in West Bengal. They pointed out that Panchayat System has brought about a churning of the submerged humanity in rural areas and created a high degree of social and political awareness among the villagers. Power structure of the panchayat members is heavily in favour of upper middle classes. In an interesting study of gram panchayat in Burdwan district of West Bengal G.K Lieten²⁸ (1992) pointed out that power structures are highly in favour of under privileged classes. Jalaluddin (1995)²⁹ conducted a study in the district of Birbhum on leadership style in Panchayati Raj and rural development. Bhattacharya (1986)³⁰ made a study in the district of Burdwan on participation under the Panchayat system in West Bengal. Roy Chowdhuri (1974)³¹ made an attempt to evaluate the role of Panchayati Raj bodies in production programme of a village in West Bengal. Jena³² (1999) enlightened in his study in the district of Midnapur on finances of Panchayat. Neil Webster³³ (1992) in his study on panchayati Raj in West Bengal focused some dissatisfactory performance of panchayats. There are two studies on Panchayati Raj in North Bengal. One study was undertaken by Mandal (1999)³⁴ in the district of Cooch Behar who focused light on only women in Panchayati Raj while Bose³⁵ (1977) in his study in the district of Jalpaiguri threw light on finances of Panchayat.

The literature available throws light on the working of P.R. in West Bengal on some selected aspect. Moreover only two individual studies are available in North Bengal. Out of them one takes care of the studies of women in Panchayat and second one deals with Panchayat finance. None has taken the enquiry of overall performance of Panchayat in respect to rural development in the district of Cooch Behar. This is a maiden attempt and this study may prove as the stepping stone in this direction.

g. Methodology:

Our methodology of the study is based on two types of data secondary & primary. The secondary data has been collected from books, journals, and official record from Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samiti, gram panchayat, annual reports, State level reports, and census reports. In many cases different relevant information have been collected from the office of the panchayat, District Magistrate, lead bank cell, District Rural Development Agency. Frequent discussions have been made with the concerned Block Development officer and their officials, Sabhadhipati, Zilla Parisad for selecting sample panchayats.

For in-depth study on the subject and to receive primary level data, we have conducted a field survey or sample survey. For this purpose, we have adopted **fourth stage random sampling** where stage-I is the choice of blocks from the district, stage-II is the choice of two gram panchayats from the blocks, stage-III is the choice of villages from the panchayats and stage-IV is the choice of beneficiaries from the villages.

In the **first stage** 2 blocks of the district have been classified into two categories viz. developed and underdeveloped. Thereafter one block from each category has been selected randomly. Cooch Behar-II and Mathabhanga-II have been selected from developed and underdeveloped category of blocks respectively.

In the **Second Stage** two-gram panchayats – One developed gram panchayat from developed block and another underdeveloped gram panchayat from underdeveloped block have been selected randomly. Developed gram panchayat Khagrabari from developed block, Cooch Behar-II and underdeveloped gram panchayat Sikarpur from underdeveloped block, Mathabhanga-II have been selected for our purpose.

In the **Third Stage** four village – two from each gram panchayat have been selected randomly. The villages are Mahisbathan and Banchukamari from Khagrabari Gram Panchayat and Nalangabari and Mohanpur from Shikarpur Gram Panchayat.

In the **Fourth Stage** a list of beneficiaries has been prepared. A total of 100 beneficiaries (25 in each village) have been selected randomly. Finally, relevant information, primary data have been collected from the beneficiaries through questionnaires and personal interviews. The questionnaires prepared for survey has been given in appendix VI C.

Data gathered were tabulated and analysed through general statistical tools and interpreted accordingly.

h. Limitations of the Study:

The study is empirical & explanatory in nature. Data, collected through multiple channels and sources are mainly a combination of primary and secondary types. Inadequacy of data and lack of initiative from different government and panchayat offices in many cases have made the scope of investigation limited. To get relevant information from village respondents in many cases have put the matter in an ambiguous situation. Moreover, the apprehensive and evasive nature of the village people seemed to be a great difficulty in the way of primary data from field survey. The existence of widespread illiteracy and ignorance appeared to create problem in getting precise information. But most of the difficulties were overcome with the help of local people & students and frequent visits. The entire work has been motivated positivist and diagnostic in nature.

I. Schematic Arrangement:

The theme of the study is divided into seven chapters. **The first** is an introductory one. This chapter contains the specific objective of the

study, statement of the problem, review of literature. The methodology and limitation of the study are also discussed here.

The second chapter discusses Panchayat Raj in West Bengal. The main discussion centres around the historical overview of panchayat in the Pre & post independence period, Left Front government & Panchayat Raj, Power & functions of Panchayats and decentralised Planning approach of development

The third Chapter intends to focus the Position of PR in Cooch Behar District. Profile of the research area has been discussed in terms of location, boundary, administrative units, growth of population, urban-rural composition, scheduled caste and tribe population, occupational distribution, literacy level, cropping pattern, production of principal crops, fertiliser consumption, nature of irrigation. The Chapter also discusses panchayat election in the district along with party representation of the gram Panchayat members in the district.

The fourth chapter deals with caste, class and power structure of the panchayat members in respect to rural development in a backward region Cooch Behar. The chapter is divided into two sections. In section-I, the caste, class and power structure have been discussed in terms of the district as a whole and in section-II, it has been discussed with respect to the sample panchayats.

The fifth chapter focuses attention on financial resource of the panchayats in terms of tax revenue, non-tax revenue. Analysis of expenditure pattern on different development activities has also been made here.

The sixth chapter highlights the role of panchayats and poverty alleviation programme on the rural economy of Cooch Behar. For detailed study, the chapter has been divided in two sections – section I & II. In section-I, the progress on implementation of IRDP & its impact on the target group of people of the district have been discussed. In

section-II, similarly, the major rural development programme J.R.Y. has been discussed.

The chapter seven is concluding one that presents briefly the major findings of our study relevant to different chapters. In view of the findings, it also throws light on some recommendations to make PR institutions more effective bodies for promoting rural development and welfare.

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Chapter-II

Panchayat Raj in West Bengal

Introduction:

'Panchayat Raj system' or 'democratic decentralisation' is one of the important political innovations of Independent India and came into existence in 1959. They are the statutory elected local bodies with necessary resources, power and authority to plan and implement the development 'Programmes in rural areas. Previously, the development functions were discharged by bureaucrats working under state and central governments, a system that received widespread criticism as inefficient, corrupt and inequitable. There were much evidences that the poor functioning of local public services in India relates to the centralised and non-participatory nature of their management. Moreover, there was little scope for citizens to voice their demands in the formal institutional structures.

The experience of West Bengal under the panchayat system stands in sharp contrast with that of other states in India and together with land reform it has been credited for playing an important role in the impressive economic turnaround of the state. It is the first and only major state which has had timely Panchayat election on a party basis regularly every five years since 1978, a year after the Left Front government was elected to Power in the State with a massive and growing mandate. Under the era of three-tier the village panchayat is the lowest unit. The general body of the village panchayat is the 'Gram Sabha'. The entire electorate of panchayat circle constitutes the 'Gram Sabha'. The Panchayat Samiti is the second tier of the Panchayat Raj as the intermediate (Block level). At the top tier i.e. the district level is the Zilla Parishad which is primarily a coordinating body supervising the activities of panchayat and panchayat samities. The Left Front Government also has pushed up the process of decentralised planning responsibilities to the grass root level through the panchayat framework. These institutions are entrusted with the great task of fulfilling

the felt needs and aspirations of the rural people and development of the villages.

a. Historical Overview of Panchayat in the Pre-independence Period.

Village Panchayat have existed since time immemorial in India. If we go into the historical context of Panchayat Raj system, we will find that the system has been existing in India since the ancient Vedic Periods¹. In Vedic age, the village was looked after by a person who is known as 'Gramini'. The Mauryan and Gupta administration, used Panchayats to perform works relating to administrative, Social and economic development.

The British Government with a view to preserve and stabilise its political control, took various measures and recognised Village Panchayats. A special commission was appointed in 1909 on local self-government which suggested the need for revitalising village panchayats for handling local affairs². Subsequently a number of acts were like the Bengal passed village Self-government Act of 1919, Madras, Bombay and United provinces village Panchayats Act of 1926, Punjab village Panchayats Act of 1935 etc. to look after village affairs and certain matters relating to their development. But the Panchayats formed under these Acts were not democratic bodies as their members were mostly nominated by Government. The powers given to them were meager and their financial resources were also limited.

The Indian National Congress also took interest in the organisation of Panchayats to make them people's institutions. Mahatma Gandhi had pointed out that Independence must begin at the bottom. Every village should be a republic or panchayat having full powers. The greater the power of panchayats, the better for the people³.

b. Panchayat Raj in Independent India.

After Independence Article 40 of the Directive principles of State Policy of the constitution lays down that "that State shall take steps to



organise village Panchayats and endow them with such powers as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self Government⁴. The introduction of the community Development programme (CDP) in first Five-Year Plan gave a new dimension as well as impetus to the participation of people in development. But CDP failed to fulfil the expectations because of non-association of people and their representatives in the planning and execution of development schemes. Moreover resources available for the programme were too meager compared with the need and spread to think for any significant achievement. The experience gained from CDP made it clear that effective participation of the representatives of the people in development programmes was possible only if they were associated with policy making and planning at the local level with statutory power⁵.

The Balwantray Mehta Committee, had therefore, strongly recommended the establishment of statutory elected local bodies and devolution to them of the necessary resources, power and authority to plan and implement the development programmes under a system which has come to be popularly known as 'democratic decentralisation' or 'Panchayat Raj System'. This system is one of the important political innovations of Independent India and came into existence in 1959⁶. It was hoped that the system would work as infinitely large number of lamps shedding their light around as a means of height achieving comprehensive rural development and people's welfare⁷. The State of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh became the pioneers. The other States followed and by the end of decade Panchayat Raj system had been established in different parts of the country⁸.

c. Panchayat Raj in West Bengal.

As with the majority of the States, West Bengal accepted the need for the form of Panchayati Raj following the principles and Philosophy presented in the Mehta Report. The structure of Panchayat Raj was not uniform in all States. They had involved their own pattern of democratic decentralisation. They had involved their own pattern of democratic

decentralisation. West Bengal adopted the three-tier Panchayati Raj System following the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973⁹. Prior to 1973, Old Panchayati Raj System existed in West Bengal. Accepting the Asoke Mehta Committee's recommendation of participating Political Parties directly in Panchayat Act of 1973, era of new Panchayati Raj started in West Bengal from the year 1978 when first Panchayat Election was held¹⁰. Under new era of three-tier structure, the village Panchayat is the lowest unit. The general body of the village Panchayat is the Gram Sabha. The entire electorate of Panchayat Circle constitutes the Gram Samsad¹¹. Every gram panchayat shall at its first meeting at which a quorum is present elect in the prescribed manner one of its members to be the pradhan and another member to be the 'Upa-Pradhan' of the Gram Panchayat¹². Pradhan is the Chairperson of the gram panchayat. As per Panchayat Election of 1988, there were 3304-gram panchayats in West Bengal¹³.

The Panchayat Samiti is the Second tier of the Panchayat Raj at the intermediate level (Block level). Every Panchayat Samiti shall at its first meeting at which a quorum is present, elect in the prescribed manner one of its members to be the 'Sabhapati' and another member to be the 'Sahakari Sabhapati' of Panchayat Samiti¹⁴. Sabhapati is the Executive Head of the Panchayat Samiti. The Panchayat Samiti is mainly composed of elected members in addition to all elected members there are a number of ex-officio members. All Pradhans of the gram Panchayats covered by the Panchayat Samiti/Block are entitled to attend along with MLA's and MP's from the constituency who are not ministers. As per Panchayat Election of 1998, there were 339 Panchayat Samities in West Bengal.¹⁵

At the topmost tier i.e. the district level is the Zilla Parishad which is primarily a coordinating body supervising the activities of Panchayats and Panchayat Samities. The Zilla Parishad is responsible for organising and administering the development of the district. Sabhadhipati is the executive Head of Zilla Parishad shall at its first meeting at which a quorum is

present, elect in the prescribed manner one of its members to be the Sabhadhipati and another member to be the 'Sahakari Sabhadhipati' of Zilla Parishad¹⁶. The Zilla Parishad is mainly composed of elected members. In addition to the elected members all Sabhadipatis of Panchayat Samities are ex-officio members as are MLA's, MP's and members of the Rajya Sabha from the district. As per panchayat election of 1998 there were 16 Zilla Parishad in West Bengal¹⁷.

d. Left Front Government and Panchayati Raj in West Bengal.

The revitalisation and democratisation of the panchayat system were the first initiatives taken by the left front Government in West Bengal after it was voted in to office in 1977¹⁸. On coming to power the left front government embarked upon a programme of rural resurgence that had two legs, panchayats and land reform. The first and second united front government (UFG) could not strengthen panchayat system so much because of their short staying in power. But during 1969-70, a massive drive had been undertaken by the united front government (UFG) to detect and vest lands that had been clandestinely retained by the landowners beyond their entitlement. Over million acres of good agricultural land had thereby been taken over¹⁹. This considerably weakened the hold of the big landlords who had traditionally led rural society because of their dominant economic and social position. Thus when the first panchayat election took place in West Bengal in the year 1978, the power structure in rural areas had altered substantially²⁰. As a result instead of empowering the already powerful, the panchayats in West Bengal placed power in the hands of new comers who could be relied upon to implement land reform measures faithfully.

Left Front government dominated by CPI (M), had been in office since 1977 with a massive and growing mandate. Since the Assembly election of 1977, the state of West Bengal has a stable government. In Assembly election of 1977 CPI (M) won 177 seats out of 294, followed by 174 in 1982 and 187 in 1987. In 1991 election CPI (M) won 182 seats

followed by 150 in 1996. In 2001 CPI (M) got 143 seats. The stable governance of left front headed by CPI (M) in comparison to other parties would be better understood from the Table 2.1

Table –2.1

West Bengal Assembly Elections: Position of Political Parties

Year	Party	1977	1982	1987	1991	1996	2001
	CPI(M)	177	174	187	182	150	143
	Forward Block	25	28	26	29	21	25
	RSP	20	19	18	18	18	17
	CPI	02	07	11	06	06	07
	United Congress	20	-	-	-	-	-
	CONG(I)	-	49	40	43	82	26
	TMC	-	-	-	-	-	60
	Muslim League	01	-	01	-	-	-
	SUCI	04	02	02	02	02	02
	Others	45	15	09	14	15	14
	Total	294	294	294	294	294	294

Source: I) Results of West Bengal Assembly Election, 1996 Ganashakti, P-124.

ii) Results of West Bengal Assembly Election, 2001, The Peoples Democracy, May, P-8.

Under such stability of governance the left front government headed by CPI (M) took keen interest on panchayat election regularly as a state policy to usher a new social order for the socio-economic transformation of the rural community of West Bengal. Since 1978 panchayat elections are being held regularly under left front regime. The last five panchayat election in West Bengal (1978-1998) gave the left front an overwhelming mandate in every tier i.e. gram panchayat, panchayat samiti and Zilla Parishad²². There had been marked the largest participation of rural electorate and political dominance of left front mainly CPI (M) party in rural areas. Table 2.2 will speak for the truth.

Table - 2.2
RESULTS OF LAST FIVE PANCHAYAT ELECTION OF
WEST BENGAL (1978-1998)

PARTY	YEAR	GRAM PANCHAYAT		PANCHAYAT SAMITI		ZILLA PARISHAD		TOTAL THREE TIRES	
		SEATS	%	SEATS	%	SEATS	%	SEATS	%
CPI(M)	1998	24,454	49.72	5,160	60.60	560	78.21	30,174	51.56
	1993	35,328	57.94	6,341	67.11	529	80.76	42,198	59.34
	1988	33,918	64.62	6,549	71.97	531	80.70	40,998	65.86
	1983	24,171	54.06	5,023	59.80	453	68.64	29,647	55.14
	1978	27,886	61.03	5,555	67.15	482	76.75	33,923	62.14
CPI	1998	660	1.34	111	1.30	17	2.38	788	1.35
	1993	806	1.32	95	1.01	6	0.92	907	1.28
	1988	896	1.71	114	1.25	7	1.06	1,017	1.63
	1983	701	1.57	94	1.12	1	0.15	796	1.48
	1978	816	1.79	131	1.58	5	0.80	952	1.74
RSP	1998	1,320	2.68	257	3.02	26	3.63	1,603	2.74
	1993	1,517	2.49	239	2.53	14	2.14	1,770	2.49
	1988	1,572	2.99	276	3.07	25	3.80	1,873	3.01
	1983	1,232	2.76	248	2.95	17	2.58	1,497	2.78
	1978	1,665	3.64	349	8.22	30	4.78	2,044	3.78
Forward Block	1998	959	1.95	160	1.88	24	3.35	1,143	1.96
	1993	1,252	2.05	169	1.79	17	2.60	1,438	2.02
	1988	1,405	2.68	222	2.88	23	3.50	1,650	2.65
	1983	1,080	2.42	192	2.29	25	3.79	1,297	2.41
	1978	1,444	3.17	320	3.87	43	6.85	1,811	3.32
Independent &	1998	195	0.40	24	0.28	5	0.70	224	0.38

Continued

Table - 2.2
RESULTS OF LAST FIVE PANCHAYAT ELECTION OF
WEST BENGAL (1978-1998)

PARTY	YEAR	GRAM PANCHAYAT		PANCHAYAT SAMITI		ZILLA PARISHAD		TOTAL THREE TIRES	
		SEATS	%	SEATS	%	SEATS	%	SEATS	%
other Supported by L.F	1993	329	0.54	29	0.31	6	0.92	364	0.51
	1988	168	0.32	9	0.10	4	0.61	181	0.29
	1983	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1978	299	0.65	11	0.13	2	0.32	312	0.57
L.F Total	1998	27,588	56.09	5,712	67.08	632	88.27	33,932	58.08
	1993	39,232	64.35	6,873	72.75	572	87.33	46,667	65.67
	1988	37,959	72.32	7,170	78.79	590	89.67	45,719	73.45
	1983	27,360	61.20	5,567	66.27	499	75.61	33,426	62.17
	1978	32,114	70.28	6,366	76.95	562	89.49	39,042	71.51
Cong. (I)	1998	5,962	12.12	831	9.76	32	4.47	6,825	3.86
	1993	16,300	26.73	2,155	22.81	72	10.99	18,527	4.75
	1988	12,298	23.43	1,712	18.81	61	9.27	14,071	3.88
	1983	14,641	32.75	2,526	30.07	151	22.88	17,318	5.56
	1978	13,435	29.40	1,883	22.76	65	10.35	15,383	0.31
TMC	1998	9,773	19.87	1,439	16.90	38	5.31	11,250	19.26
	1993	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1988	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1983	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1978	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
B.J.P	1998	3,830	7.78	328	3.85	1	0.14	4,159	7.12
	1993	2,372	3.89	121	1.28	-	-	2,493	3.51

Continued

Table - 2.2
RESULTS OF LAST FIVE PANCHAYAT ELECTION OF
WEST BENGAL (1978-1998)

PARTY	YEAR	GRAM PANCHAYAT		PANCHAYAT SAMITI		ZILLA PARISHAD		TOTAL THREE TIRES	
		SEATS	%	SEATS	%	SEATS	%	SEATS	%
	1988	36	0.07	3	0.03	-	-	39	0.06
	1983	34	0.08	2	0.02	-	-	36	0.07
	1978	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Independent & Other	1998	2,038	4.14	205	2.41	13	1.81	2,256	3.86
	1993	3,067	5.03	299	3.16	11	1.68	3,377	4.75
	1988	2,196	4.18	215	2.36	7	1.06	2,418	3.88
	1983	2,674	5.98	305	3.63	10	1.52	2,989	5.56
	1978	145	0.32	24	0.29	1	0.16	170	0.31
TOTAL	1998	49,191	100.00	8,515	100.00	716	100.00	58,422	100.00
	1993	60,971	100.00	9,448	100.00	655	100.00	71,074	100.00
	1988	52,489	100.00	9,100	100.00	658	100.00	62,247	100.00
	1983	44,709	100.00	8,400	100.00	660	100.00	53,769	100.00
	1978	45,694	100.00	8,273	100.00	628	100.00	54,595	100.00

Source: SHRENI DRISTI BHANGHITE PANCHAYAT- Suryakanta Misra,
2nd Edition-1999, National book agency (Calcutta).

e. Powers and Function of New Panchayat Raj Bodies in West Bengal.

The Panchayat Raj institutions are subject to the authority of the state government. They enjoy the delegated powers and function as are purely local in character. The West Bengal panchayat Act, 1973 provides for functions of panchayat, panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad both obligatory and discretionary in addition to the functions entrusted to them by the state government. Panchayat in all states have been provided with along list of functions and duties covering the entire field of civic administration and social and economic development in rural areas.

i. The Gram Panchayat:

In the case of gram panchayat, all its executive powers are vested on Pradhan and in his or her absence the Uppa-Pradhan. As per section 19 of the West Bengal panchayat Act 1973 the obligatory functions of the gram panchayat²³ are:

- 1) Sanitation, conservancy, drainage and prevention of public nuisances.
- 2) Curative and preventive measures in respect of malaria, small pox, cholera or any other epidemic.
- 3) Supply of drinking water and the cleansing and disinfecting the sources of supply and storage of water.
- 4) The maintenance, repair and construction of public streets and protection thereof.
- 5) The removal of encroachments of public streets or public places.
- 6) The protection and repair of buildings or other property vested in it.
- 7) The management and care of public tanks, common grazing grounds, burning ghats and public graveyards.
- 8) Organising voluntary labour for community works and works for the upliftment of its area.
- 9) The imposition, assessment and collection of taxes, rates of fees.

Section 21 of the Act provides discretionary functions of Panchayats²⁴.

They are:

- 1) The maintenance of lighting of public Streets.
- 2) Planning and maintaining trees on the sides of Public Streets.
- 3) The Sinking of Wells and excavation of ponds & tanks.
- 4) The introduction and promotion of Co-operative stores and other Co-operative enterprises.
- 5) The construction and regulation of markets, the holding and regulation of fairs, melas, hats and exhibition of local products of home industries.
- 6) Filling up of in sanitary depressions and reclaiming of unhealthy localities.
- 7) The promotion of cottage and village industries.
- 8) Promotion of dairy and poultry.
- 9) Promotion of fishery.
- 10) Poverty alleviation programme.
- 11) The construction and maintenance of sarais, dharmasalas, rest houses, cattlesheds.
- 12) The disposal of unclaimed cattle.
- 13) The establishment and maintenance of Libraries and reading rooms.
- 14) A cultural activity including sports and games.
- 15) Assisting in the prevention of burglary and dacoity.
- 16) Any other local works or service of public utility.

A gram Panchayat shall also perform other functions as the state government may assign to it.

ii. Panchayat Samiti:

In general terms the Panchayat Samiti has similar responsibilities to those held by the gram Panchayat. The difference being that the former's power is at higher level while the gram Panchayat handles the local administration at village level. The Panchayat samiti operates across the whole block. Outside the orbit of gram panchayat affairs, the

Panchayat Samiti is also required to monitor and supervise the work undertaken by the gram panchayats.

Section 109 of the West Bengal panchayat act 1973 mentions the following duty of the panchayat samity²⁵.

- 1) Undertake schemes or adopt measures including the giving of financial assistance relating to the development of agriculture, fisheries, live stock, khadi, cottage and small scale industries, Co-operative movement, rural credit, water supply, irrigation, public health and Sanitation including establishment of dispensaries and hospital, communication, Primary & secondary Education, Social forestry and farm forestry including fuel and fodder, rural electrification.
- 2) Manage and maintain any work of public utility.
- 3) Make grants-in-aid of any School, public institution or public welfare to organisation within the block.
- 4) Adopt measures for the relief of distress.
- 5) Co-ordinate and integrate the development plans & schemes prepared by gram panchayats in the block.
- 6) May take over the maintenance and control of any road bridge, tank, ghat, well, channel or drain belonging to private owners or any other authority.

A panchayat samiti shall also perform other functions as the state government may assign to it.

iii. Zilla Parishad:

The Zilla Parishad is the apex body of the three-tier Panchayat Raj. The Zilla Parishad is entrusted with the responsibility of overall development of the district. It organises and administers the development of the district. It has general powers of supervision of both panchayat samities and the gram panchayats. The Zilla Parishad acts as the interface between district's political institutions and the state government. The overall management of its affairs is the responsibility of the

'Sabhadhipati' (Chairperson) and the 'Sabhadhipati' (Vice-chairperson), District Magistrate (DM) is the executive officer of the Zilla Parishad. Section 153 of the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973 assigned to the Zilla Parishad the similar functions of Panchayat Samiti²⁶. The difference is that the former's powers are at higher level (District level). The Zilla Parishad has the authority to give grants to the Panchayat Samities or Gram Panchayats. It has the power to advise the state government on all matters relating to the development work among gram panchayat and panchayat samities.

f. The Decentralised Planning Approach:

Decentralised planning refers specially to the involvement of institutions below the State level necessitated both by the administrative developmental exigencies and the constitutional status of the local institutions. Under such planning there would be proper integration to lower level plans into those at higher level; Village to block to district to State. Such plans would be more sensitive to local needs and there would be people's participation in development programmes²⁷.

The Left front Government after 1985 has pushed up the process of decentralised planning responsibilities to the grass-root level through the panchayat framework. Panchayats now have come into the mainstream of planning and implementation of different rural development programmes. From 1978 until 1985, the work of the Panchayats remained primarily the local implementation of the State Policy and of programmes that came from the state or central governments²⁸.

Under the present structure of planning in West Bengal each Gram Panchayat is required to prepare a statement of the existing needs of the population of the area, a 'basic needs statement'.

These are passed to the block planning committee established by the Panchayat Samiti which has the responsibility to formulate a plan under

different development programmes for the command area of its block as a whole and the basic need identified by the gram panchayat.

These consolidated plans are then passed to the 'District Planning Committee' constituted by the 'Zilla Parishad'. Within the overall guidelines regarding priorities and the allocation of funds for each district indicated from the state level the District Planning Committee (DPC) is expected to formulate an overall 'annual District Plan' incorporating the plan proposals of the blocks & basic need proposal of the gram Panchayat. The 'Annual District Plan' is placed before a 'District Planning & Co-ordinating Committee for final approval. The Chairperson of D.P.C. is the Sabhadhipati, Zilla Parishad and Member Secretary is the District Magistrate. Other members are – Sabhapaties of all Panchayat Samities, one representative of each of the Statutory bodies in the district, District level officers of all departments in the district²⁹.

The implementation of development plans depends upon the Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayats under the guidance of Zilla Parishad. In Many cases, the implementation of the departmental schemes is the responsibility of the concerned departments, though there should be proper co-ordination between panchayat and other government officials. The District Rural Development Agency (DRDA) which is an important agency for the implementation of different rural development programmes in the district was even tied into the Panchayat framework. So Panchayats have been brought into the mainstream of planning and implementation of different rural development programmes in the district³⁰.

Summary:

The historical context of 'Panchayat Raj' system had been existing in India since the ancient Vedic age. The actual working of this system came into existence in 1959, after following the

recommendation of Balwantray Mehta Committee. Panchayat Raj institution are the statutory elected local bodies, with necessary resources, power and authority of plan and implement the development programmes in rural areas. The state of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh became the Pioneers.

As the majority of the states, West Bengal also accepted the principles and philosophy of Panchayat Raj system of three tier following the West Bengal Panchayat Act, 1973. Prior to 1973, **old panchayati raj** system existed in West Bengal. The revitalisation and democratisation of the panchayat system were the first initiative taken by the Left Front Government in West Bengal after it was voted into office in 1977 with massive and growing mandate. Accepting the Asoke Meheta Committee's recommendation of participating political parties directly in panchayat election and subsequently by amending the West Bengal Panchayat Act of 1973, era of **New Panchayat Raj** started in West Bengal from the year 1978 when first panchayat election was held. It is the first Indian state which has had timely panchayat elections on a party basis regularly every five years since 1978.

Under new era of three-tier panchayat structure in West Bengal, the village panchayat is the lowest body. The general body of the village panchayat is the 'Gram Sabha'. The entire electorate of panchayat circle constitutes the gram sabha. The Pradhan is the chairperson of Gram Panchayat. Panchayats have been provided with a long list of functions and duties covering the entire field of civil administration and social & economic development in rural areas. The panchayat samiti is the second tier at the intermediate level (Block level). **Sabhapati** is the chairperson of Panchayat Samity. It has similar responsibilities to those held by the gram panchayat higher level (block level). Moreover it is also required to monitor and supervise the work undertaken by the Gram Panchayat. The Zilla Parishad is the **apex body** of three tiers Panchayat Raj. The Zilla Parishad is entrusted with the responsibility of

overall development of the district. It has general powers of supervision of both Panchayat Samities and the gram Panchayats. **Sabhadhipati** is the chairperson of Zilla Parishad.

Since the Assembly Election of 1977, the state of West Bengal has a **stable government** under Left Front dominated by CPI (M). In assembly election of 1977 CPI(M) won 177 seats out 294 followed by 174 in 1982 and 187 in 1987. In 1991, CPI (M) won 182 seats followed by 150 in 1996 and 143 in 2001 (Table 2.1). Under such stability of governance the Left Front government took interest on panchayat election regularly as a state policy to usher a new social order for the socio-economic transformation of the rural community of West Bengal. The last five panchayat elections (1978-96) gave the Left Front an overwhelming mandate in every tier i.e. Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samity and Zilla Parishad (Table2.2). There had been marked the largest participation of rural electorate and political dominance of Left Front mainly CPI (M) party in rural areas. They pushed up decentralised planning responsibilities to the grass root level through panchayat framework to fulfil the felt need, and aspirations of the rural people and development of the villages.

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Chapter-III

Panchayat Raj in practice – A Study of Cooch Behar District

Introduction:

The district of Cooch Behar is a backward district in West Bengal in many senses than one. It is absolutely rural in nature and agriculture based. Left front mainly CPI (M) has a strong political base in the district both in terms of popular support and organisational maturity. Their policies and programmes are generally seen as pro-people. This is specially the case in the countryside where land reform held much promise for large section of the under privileged. Under strong political stability of LF in the district, the Panchayat Raj or democratic decentralisation has been working as a state policy to usher a new social order for the socio-economic transformation of rural community of the district. Many observers feel that Panchayats have achieved much that is tangible, especially in land reform but also in rural development generally. They have brought about a churning of the submerged humanity in rural areas and created a high degree of political awareness among all sections. The concerted effort at the political level acts effectively to change rural power structure in favour of the marginalised or suppressed groups.

Our investigation into panchayat raj programme in a backward district Cooch Behar focussing on two gram panchayats in particular seeks to assess how far this programme has been successful to transform the rural economy of Cooch Behar by improving the socio-economic conditions of the rural poor in the light of wider aims of the panchayat raj programme under LFG. The present chapter will throw light on the political participation of the local leaders in respect to a backward district Cooch Behar.

a) Profile Analysis of the District.

i) Location, Boundary & Administrative Units.

Location: The district Cooch Behar geographically forms part of the Himalayan Terai of West Bengal. It lies between the parallel $25^{\circ} 57' 40''$ and $26^{\circ} 32' 20''$ north latitude in the Northern Hemisphere. The eastern - most extremity of the district is marked by $89^{\circ} 54' 35''$ east longitude and its Western most extremity by $88^{\circ} 47' 40''$ longitude. The Chief town bearing the same name is situated on the river Torsa by $26^{\circ} 19' 86''$ north latitude and $89^{\circ} 23' 53''$ east longitude.⁽¹⁾

Boundary: The district is bounded on the north by the Western Dooars of the Jalpaiguri district. Its northern frontier is about 20 miles south of the Bhutan ranges of the Himalayas. On the east it is bounded by the Gama Duars and Pargana Ghurla of the Goalpara district of Assam and parganas Gaibari and Bhitambar of Rangpur, now in Bangladesh.⁽²⁾ The Brahmaputra at the point where it turns out from its Western course a short way below Dhubri is about 20 miles from the eastern border of the district. The southern limit of the district's territory is determined by the international boundary between India and Bangladesh. According to the census report of 1991 the area of the district is 3387 sq. kms.⁽³⁾

Administrative Unit: The district of Cooch Behar has 9 Police Stations viz. Haldibari, Mekhliganj, mathabhanga, Sitalkuchi, Cooch Behar, Tufanganj, Dinhata and Sitai, Ghoksadanga. There are 5 Sub Divisions viz. Cooch Behar, Tufanganj, Dinhata, Mekhliganj, Mathabhanga. The district is divided into 12 C.D. Block and it has 128-Gram Panchayets, 12 Panchayet Samities, 1144 inhabited Villages and 6 Municipalities.

Table – 3.1**Administrative units of the district Cooch Behar**

District	Sub Division	Police Station	Block	Panchayat Samiti	Gram Panchayat	Mouja	Inhabited Villages	Municipality
Cooch Behar	5	10	12	12	128	1168	1144	6
W.B	59	430	345	333	3248	40911	37910	110

Source: District Statistical Hand Book, Cooch Behar, 1999-2000 (Combined)

ii) A Study of Population of the District.

As per 1951 census total population of the district of the Cooch Behar was 668949. In 1961 it rose to 1019806. During this decade the growth in population of this district had been phenomenal. In fact during this decade Cooch Behar recorded the highest rate of growth in population (52.45 %). This was the result of immigrants from erstwhile East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh). In the year 1971 the population of the district again rose to 1414183. During this decade the percentage increase in population was recorded as 38.67 percent. This was partly for the influx of peoples from Bangladesh and partly from neighbouring State Assam. In the census year 1981 the district was inhabited by a population of 1771643. During this decade the percentage increase in population was recorded as 25.28 percent. This was because of natural growth of population on the one hand and inflow of peoples from Assam on the other hand. In the last census year of 1991 the district of Cooch Behar witnessed the population of 2171145. During this decade the percentage increase in population was recorded as 22.54 percent. This was partly responsible for natural growth in population and partly responsible for the influx of peoples still from Assam. During the census periods (1951-91) the district had a great bearing on the growth of population because of its strategic location - boarder of Assam and Bangladesh. Table 3.2 speaks for the truth.

KOCH BIHAR (West Bengal)

Figure- 3.1

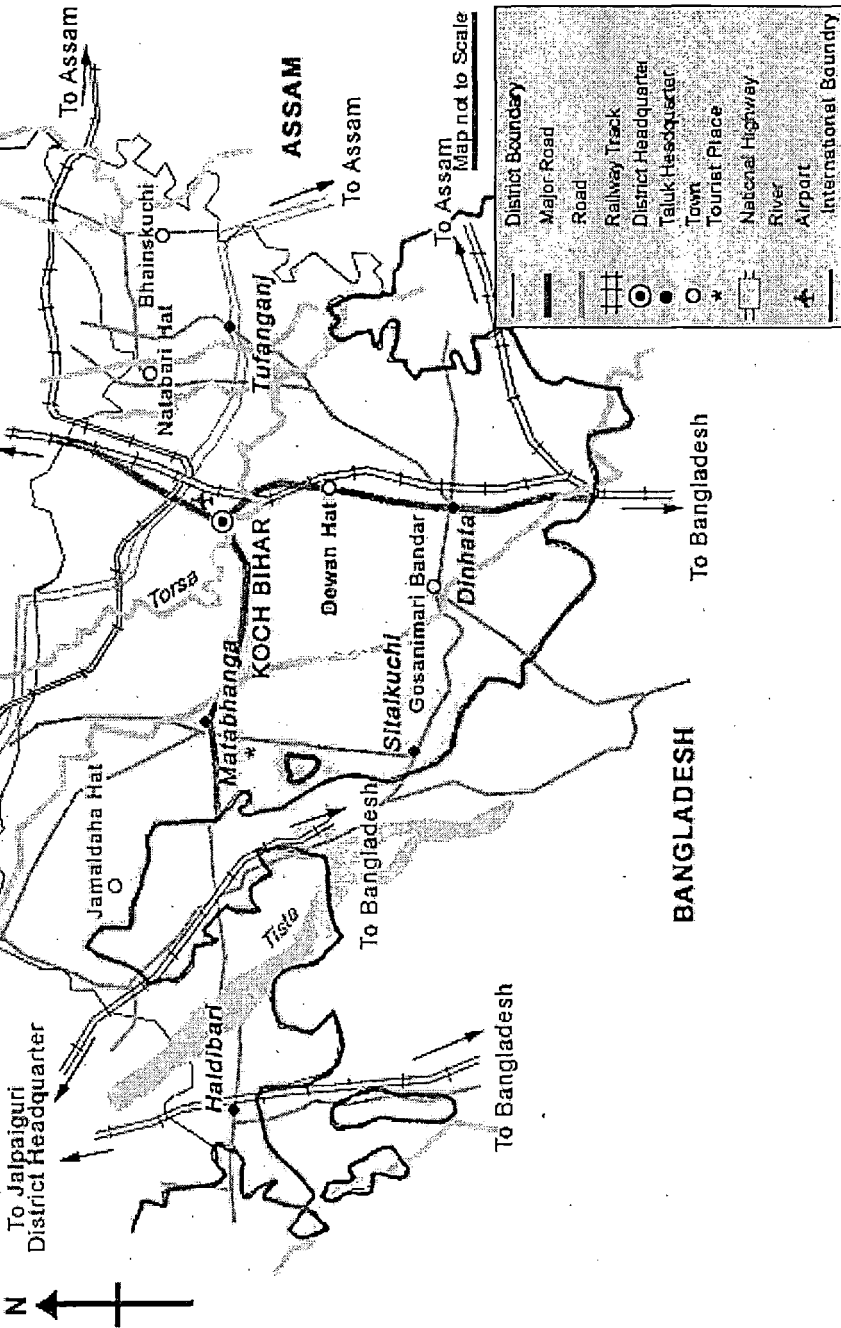


Table-3.2
Growth of Population during census periods (1951-1991)

Year	Population	% Increase
1951	668949	-
1961	1019806	52.45
1971	14114183	38.67
1981	1771643	25.28
1991	2171145	22.54

Source : Census reports, India, 1951,1961,1971,1981,1991

iii) Urban - Rural Composition:

The district of Cooch Behar is regarded as rural district. The degree of urbanisation is almost absent in the district. From the census reports it is evident that there is heavy concentration of population in rural areas of the district. During census years (1951 to 1991) on an average 92.80 percent population is earmarked as rural population. In 1951 percentage of rural population to total population was recorded as 92.50 percent. In the last census year 1991 similar picture was obtained i.e. percentages of rural population to total population was recorded as 91.19 percent which is much higher than the percentages of State as a whole (73.43%). The percentage of urban population to total population in the year 1991 was recorded as 7.81 percent. Table 3.3 shows the urban rural composition in different census year of the district.

Table-3.3
Urban Rural Composition of the District (1951-1991)

Year	Total population	Urban population	Rural population	% to total Population		
				Urban	Rural	Total
1951	668949	50180	618769	7.50	92.50	100.00
1961	1019806	71446	948360	7.01	92.99	100.00
1971	1414183	96652	1317531	6.83	93.17	100.00
1981	1771643	122260	1649383	6.90	93.10	100.00
1991	2171145	169497	2001648	7.81	92.19	100.00

Source: District Census reports, 1951,1961,1971,1981,1991

iv) Scheduled Caste & Tribe population:

In order to understand the structure of population, analysis of SC/ST population are very important. There is a high concentration of SC population in the district of Cooch Behar. On the other hand ST

population is very negligible in the district. During the census years of 1961 to 1991, Scheduled Caste population exhibits a rising trend. In 1961 census SC population was 478340 which accounted 46.90 percent of total population. ST population in that year accounted only as 0.86 percent and in the year 1971 the percentage of SC population rose to 47.02 percent. The percentage of ST population to total population was recorded only as 0.75 percent. In the census year 1981 total Scheduled Caste population was 883084 which accounted 49.84 percent of total population of the district. The percentage of ST population was further reduced to 0.57 percent. In the census year 1991 the percentage of ST population to total population of the district rose to 51.76 percent. This percentage is much higher than the percentages of state as a whole (23.62 %). The percentage of Tribal population again was reduced to 0.60 percent. It is worthwhile to mention here that in the rural sector of the district every alternate person is a Scheduled Caste person. Police Station wise Scheduled Caste population is mostly found in Mekhliganj, Mathabhanga, Sitai, Haldibari and Sitalkuchi. Table 3.4 will speak for the truth.

Table-3.4
Composition of Scheduled Caste & Scheduled Tribe Population of the District (1961-1991)

Year	Total population	SC population	ST population	% of SC population	% of ST population
1961	1019806	478340	8809	46.90	0.86
1971	1414183	665020	10611	47.02	0.75
1981	1771643	883084	10105	49.84	0.57
1991	2171145	1123719	13275	51.76	0.60

Source: District Census reports, 1961,1971,1981,1991

v) Occupational Distribution:

The district of Cooch Behar is entirely dependent on agriculture and allied activities. This dependency had been marked by the census reports. Near about 75.21percent of main workers are engaged in agricultural sector but the methods of cultivation are still primitive and

orthodox. Farmers are still obliged to pursue subsistence farming which is retarding not only the agricultural productivity but also breeding unemployment and poverty. Although Tobacco and Jute are produced in appreciable quantity, there is no carrying factor for Tobacco and the little carrying done is intended for local use. Naturally the economic condition of the people of the district is backward and the standard of living is very low. It has been observed that the population of workers engaged in agricultural sector has been reduced during the last inter-census decades 1971-81 and 1981-91 from 81.90 percent to 79.26 percent and from 79.26 percent to 75.22 percent. It has also been observed that total number of workers engaged in household Industry, manufacturing, repairing, and selling have been increased during the inter-census period. Table 3.5 shows a comparative picture of the sectoral distribution of workers in the last three census years.

Table-3.5
Number and Percentage of Workers in Industrial Categories of the District, Cooch Behar (1971-1991)

Category	1971		1981		1991	
	No. of Workers	% of Workers to total main works	No. of Workers	% of Workers to total main works	No. of Workers	% of Workers to total main works
Cultivators	261942	67.07	267173	52.02	306789	51.31
Agri. Labour	57915	14.83	139914	27.24	142935	23.90
Household Industry, Manufacturing, Repairing works	14906	3.32	10356	2.01	35383	5.92
Other works Including Services.	64237	16.45	96147	18.73	112716	18.85

Note: Total men workers were 390502 in 1971, 513590 in 1981 and 597823 in 1991.

Source : District Statistical Hand Book, Cooch Behar, 1975-76 (Combined), 1994 P-24, P-21

vi) Literacy Level:

The progress of literacy in the district of Cooch Behar has been viewed more rationally from the study of the census figures. During census years (1951-91) level of literacy exhibits a raising trend.

Percentage of male literacy although shows to some extent a satisfactory level but the female literacy shows a dissatisfactory scene in the district of Cooch Behar. Among the North Bengal districts, Darjeeling has registered the higher percentage of state literacy level. Other district's literacy level is much lower than the state average. This is because the district of Darjeeling had certain Anglo Indian School from the past. In the year 1951 the percentage of literacy in the district was only 15 percent of which percentage of male literacy was recorded to 23.20 percent and female literacy rate was is 5.3 percent. In the last census year, 1991, percentage of total literacy in the district was 45.78 percent of which male literacy rate was 57.25 percent and female literacy rate was 33.31 percent. This increase in literacy level was due to expansion of elementary primary education in the district on the one hand and some special literacy programmes undertaken by the district authority as directed by the Govt. policies on the other hand. Table 3.6 will speak for the truth.

Table-3.6
Percentage of Literacy of the District, Cooch Behar (1951-91)

Census Year	% of total literacy	% of male literacy	% of Female literacy
1951	15.00	23.20	5.30
1961	21.00	31.40	9.30
1971	21.92	31.08	11.93
1981	30.10	40.09	19.43
1991	45.78	57.35	33.31

Source: District Census reports 1951,1961,1971,1981,1991

vii) Cropping Pattern.

The proportion of agricultural land devoted to different crops at a particular period of time is known as cropping pattern. In the district of Cooch Behar larger proportion of land is available for cultivation. Table 3.7 gives an account of the area under different crops in the district for the period 1995-96 to 1999-2000. Table discloses the preponderance of food crops and the entire agricultural economy largely depends on

Paddy, Wheat, Jute, Tobacco and Potato. Over the periods 1995-96 to 1999-2000, on an average 66 percent of the total gross cropped area are under Paddy Cultivation. Proportion of area under Amon paddy to total Paddy over the period remains more or less stable. Aus paddy seems to be decline trend. The proportion of area under Boro paddy seems to rise steadily. The proportion of area under wheat cultivation remains more or less stable. Proportion of area under mustard cultivation exhibits a decline trend. In case of the cash crops like Jute and Tobacco proportion of area under cultivation seems to have a decline trend. Although in the past Tobacco was the most profitable cash crops of the district. On the other hand Potato (a commercial cash crop) seems to occupy an important position in the district. In the year 1995-96 proportion of area under potato cultivation to gross cropped area was 1.96 percent. It rose to 5.95 percent in the year 1998-99. Although the proportion of area under potato cultivation was reduced to 3.31 percent in the year 1999-2000 but the overall picture of area under potato cultivation seems to have a rising trend. It is the emergent cash crops of the district.

Table-3.7
Cropping Pattern in the district, Cooch Behar over the periods 1995-96 to 1999-2000

Percentage of cropped area under principal crops.												
Year	Amon	Aus	Boro	Total Paddy	Wheat	Mustered	Lin seeds	Other Oil seeds	Jute	Potato	Tobacco	Total
1995-96	53.27	12.34	3.99	69.60	4.18	1.73	0.39	0.95	18.85	1.99	2.31	100.00
1996-97	51.49	11.13	3.75	66.37	4.81	1.38	0.54	3.11	19.32	2.42	2.05	100.00
1997-98	51.34	8.08	3.76	63.18	3.01	1.80	0.46	0.97	23.45	3.28	1.85	100.00
1998-99	52.45	7.79	6.38	66.62	4.54	1.68	0.43	0.94	17.55	6.07	2.17	100.00
1999-2000	53.65	7.95	6.91	68.51	3.77	1.78	0.64	0.87	19.02	3.35	2.06	100.00

Note: Area under principal crops is taken as grossed cropped area Source: i) District Statistical Hand Book, Cooch Behar, 1999-2000.
ii) Personal Computation.

viii) Fertiliser Consumption:

Although Cooch Behar is an agricultural district still now agriculture in the district is backward in nature with low productivity. Among many factors the inability of the farmers to use more chemical fertiliser is responsible for this low productivity. Most of the farmers of the district still are dependent mainly on animal dung as manure. The application of high yielding variety programme has not been seen in a wide scale due to the lack of use of chemical fertiliser. Consumption of fertiliser is highly insufficient and plays a very negligible role in the agricultural development of Cooch Behar. Table 3.8 shows the fertiliser consumption per hectare of the gross cropped area of the district for the years 1995-96 to 1999-2000.

Table- 3.8
Consumption of Fertilizer in the District, Cooch Behar, over the period 1995-96 to 1999-2000

Year	Name of the Fertilizer			Total	Fertilizer Consumption per hector of gross Cropped Area
	N	P	K	N+P+K	
1995-96	24600	7500	6200	38300	85.07
1996-97	25100	10800	6700	42600	92.54
1997-98	26500	13900	7300	477700	106.04
1998-99	28100	16500	8900	53500	120.68
1999-2000	31300	19500	10600	61400	138.28

Source : i) District Statistical Hand Book, Cooch Behar, 1998,1999-2000 (Combined)
ii) Personal Computation.

From the table it appears that fertiliser consumption per hector of the gross cropped area was 85.07 Kg. in the year 1995-96. During 1999-2000 it increased to 138.28 Kg. for the overall period of five years. Fertiliser consumption per hector of the gross cropped area shows an increasing trend, although it is much lower than South Bengal district.

ix) Nature of irrigation:

Irrigation facility is an essential pre-requisite for agricultural development. This facility is very much limited in this district. Farmers still are dependent on the grace of favourable monsoon. The present sources of irrigation are Govt. Cannel's, Private Cannel's, Tanks, Wells, Deep Tube-well, Shallow Tube and R.L.I Pump etc. The district has got rich deposit of Sub-Soil water and it is channelled into fields by Shallow and Deep Tube-wells. The surface water in the district from different sources is not exploited at all. The percentage of irrigated area to the gross cropped area for the year 1995-96 to 1999-2000 is given in table

3.9

Table-3.9
Area irrigated by different sources in the District, Cooch Behar over the period 1995-96 to 1999-2000

Year	Govt. Cannels	Private			Deep Tube Wells	Other Sources	Total Area Irrigated (area in hector)	Percentage of irrigated area to Gross cropped area
		Cannels	Tanks	Wells				
1995-96	500	1700	1920	-	-	25930	5.76	
1996-97	500	1800	2030	-	-	26370	5.73	
1997-98	500	1870	3380	-	-	43350	9.63	
1998-99	500	-	5750	-	-	59890	13.52	
1999-2000	750	-	5750	-	-	60290	13.58	

Source : i) District Statistical Hand Book, Cooch Behar, 1998,1999-2000 (Combined).
ii) Personal computation.

From the above table it is evident that irrigation facilities are very negligible in comparison to the gross cropped area. In the year 1995-96 percentage of irrigated area to the gross cropped area was 5.76 percent. It rose to 13.58 percent in the year 1999-2000.

b) Results of Panchayat Elections in the District, Cooch Behar.

(1978-1998)

Like the State of West Bengal, the last five panchayat elections (1978-1998) in the district of Cooch Behar gave the Left Front mainly CPI (M) an overwhelming majority. In the district of Cooch Behar, Left Front particularly CPI (M) has one of its strongest bases, both in terms of popular support and organisational maturity. In the selection of suitable candidates, the Left Front, specifically CPI (M) would not expect difficulties. The devolution of power to the panchayats gives many people easy access to government and the opportunity to participate directly in the formal political process. The system of Panchayat Raj has created a high degree of Political and Social awareness among all sections of villagers. Those elected have had undreamed opportunities to develop into leaders. The panchayats have helped in strengthening the grass-root level democracy. In 1978 Panchayat election at the village level, the left front got 1317 seats (75.43 %) out of 1746 seats. CPI (M) alone got 778 seats (44.56%). The main opposition Cong(I) got only 247 seats (14.15%). At Panchayat Samity, Left Front got 265 seats (86.88%) out of 305 seats. CPI (M) alone occupied 157 seats (51.47%). The Con (I) got only 38 seats (12.46%). At Zilla Parishad, Left Front won 100 percent seats (22 out of 22). In subsequent Panchayat Elections of 1983, 1988, 1993 and 1998, the left front headed by CPI (M) got overwhelming mandate. The detailed result of last five Panchayat elections in the district of Cooch Behar (1978-98) is depicted in table 3.10.

Table 3.10

LAST FIVE PANCHAYAT ELECTION IN THE DISTRICT OF COOCH BEHAR (1978-98).

PARTY	YEAR	PANCHAYAT		PANCHAYAT SAMITI		ZILLA PARISHAD		THRETTIRES TOTAL	
		Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat	%
CPI(M)	1998	954	50.77	199	58.71	18	66.67	1171	52.16
	1993	1381	57.11	234	62.40	15	62.50	1630	57.86
	1988	1210	59.49	221	62.08	14	58.33	1445	59.86
	1983	734	42.03	155	46.41	12	50.00	901	42.82
	1978	778	44.56	157	51.47	10	45.45	945	45.59
AIFB	1998	101	5.38	20	5.89	2	7.41	123	5.48
	1993	92	3.80	9	2.40	3	12.50	104	3.69
	1988	446	21.93	80	22.47	9	37.50	535	22.16
	1983	345	19.76	63	18.86	7	29.17	415	19.72
	1978	531	30.41	107	35.08	12	54.55	650	31.82
CPI	1998	12	0.64	1	0.29	-	-	13	0.58
	1993	1	0.05	-	-	-	-	1	0.04
	1988	9	0.45	-	-	-	-	9	0.37
	1983	2	0.12	-	-	-	-	2	0.09
	1978	7	0.40	1	0.33	-	-	8	0.39
RSP	1998	1	0.05	-	-	-	-	1	0.05
	1993	3	0.12	-	-	-	-	3	1.11
	1988	2	0.09	-	-	-	-	2	0.08
	1983	3	0.17	-	-	-	-	3	0.15
	1978	1	0.06	-	-	-	-	1	0.05
LF	1998	1068	56.84	220	64.89	20	74.08	1308	58.27
	1993	1477	61.08	243	64.80	18	75.00	1738	61.70
	1988	1667	62.08	301	84.55	23	95.83	1991	82.47
	1983	1084	75.43	218	65.27	19	79.17	1321	62.78
	1978	1317	75.43	265	86.88	22	100.00	1604	77.38

Continued

Table 3.10
LAST FIVE PANCHAYAT ELECTION IN THE DISTRICT OF COOCH BEHAR (1978-98).

PARTY	YEAR	PANCHAYAT		PANCHAYAT SAMITI		ZILLA PARISHAD		THREESIRES TOTAL	
		Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat	%
CONG(I)	1998	221	11.76	43	12.68	4	14.81	268	11.94
	1993	535	22.13	81	21.60	2	8.33	618	21.94
	1988	358	17.60	55	15.45	1	4.17	414	17.15
	1983	638	36.54	116	34.73	5	20.83	759	36.07
	1978	247	14.15	38	12.46	-	-	285	13.75
CONG(R)	1998	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1993	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1988	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1983	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1978	17	0.97	2	0.66	-	-	19	.92
WBTMC	1998	176	9.37	24	7.08	-	-	200	8.90
	1993	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1988	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1983	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1978	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
FB(S)	1998	211	11.23	29	8.56	3	11.11	-	-
	1993	302	12.49	45	12.00	2	8.33	-	-
	1988	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1983	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1978	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
BJP	1998	159	8.46	19	5.60	-	-	178	7.93
	1993	79	3.27	6	1.60	-	-	85	3.02
	1988	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1983	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1978	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Continued

Table 3.10

LAST FIVE PANCHAYAT ELECTION IN THE DISTRICT OF COOCH BEHAR (1978-98).

PARTY	YEAR	PANCHAYAT		PANCHAYAT SAMITI		ZILLA PARISHAD		THRE TIRES TOTAL	
		Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat	%	Seat	%
SUCI	1998	3	0.16	-	-	-	-	3	.01
	1993	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1988	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1983	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	1978	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
INDEPENDENCE & OTHERS	1998	41	2.18	4	1.18	-	-	45	2.00
	1993	25	1.03	-	-	2	8.33	27	.96
	1988	9	0.44	-	-	-	-	9	.37
	1983	24	1.38	-	-	-	-	24	1.14
	1978	165	9.45	-	-	-	-	165	7.96
TOTAL	1998	1879	100.00	339	100.00	27	100.00	2245	100.00
	1993	2418	100.00	375	100.00	24	100.00	2817	100.00
	1988	2034	100.00	356	100.00	24	100.00	2414	100.00
	1983	1746	100.00	334	100.00	24	100.00	2104	100.00
	1978	1746	100.00	305	100.00	22	100.00	2073	100.00

Source: Official records, District Panchayat Office, Cooch Behar, 1978, 1983, 1988, 1993, 1998.

c) The Socio-Economic Profile of the Two Gram Panchayat.

i) Khagrabari Gram Panchayat:

Khagrabari gram panchayat is under Cooch Behar Block-II and covers six revenue villages. It has an area of 3495.68 acres and a population of 23703⁽⁴⁾ out of total population, male and female populations are 12562 and 11141 respectively. The scheduled caste and tribe population accounted 37 percent & 0.23 percent respectively. The number of literate and illiterate persons are 14221 (60 percent) and 9482 (40 percent) respectively. The literacy rate in this G.P. is comparatively higher than Sikarpur G.P. because it is adjacent to the district town on the one hand and better educational facilities are available on the other hand. There are 13 Primary, 2 Secondary & 2 Higher Secondary Schools under the area of this G.P.⁽⁵⁾

The main crops grown in the villages under this G.P. are Aman, Aus & Boro Paddy, Jute, Wheat, Mustard, Potato. Different kinds of vegetables are largely grown in this area. Total cultivable land is 2026 Acre (57.91 percent) and non-agricultural area accounted for 1469.08 acre (42.02 percent). Table 3.11 shows the area under principal crops on gross crop basis.

Table-3.11
Area under Principal Crops

Sl. No.	Name of the Crop	Area (in acres)	Percentage to Cultivable Land
1.	Aman Paddy	1870	46.02
2.	Aus Paddy	485	11.94
3.	Boro Paddy	100	2.46
4.	Jute	495	12.18
5.	Wheat	178	4.38
6.	Potato	310	7.63
7.	Mustard	117	2.88
8.	Others (All Vegetables)	508	12.50

Source: Official records, Agricultural Extension Office, Cooch Behar Block-II.

Total irrigated area under the gram panchayat is 1601 acre (45.79 percent) and non-irrigated area accounted for 1884 acre (53.89 percent). The main sources of irrigation are Shallow Tube wells, Deep

KHAGRABARI GRAM PANCHAYAT

GOPALPUR GRAMPANCHAYAT

KOCHBIHAR BLOCK II

P.S. KOCH BEHAR

DT. KOCH BEHAR

SCALE 4" = 1 Mile

Acquisition No. 44211 G. Panch
Date - 23rd March 1974

DHANGHINGUR GRAMPANCHAYAT

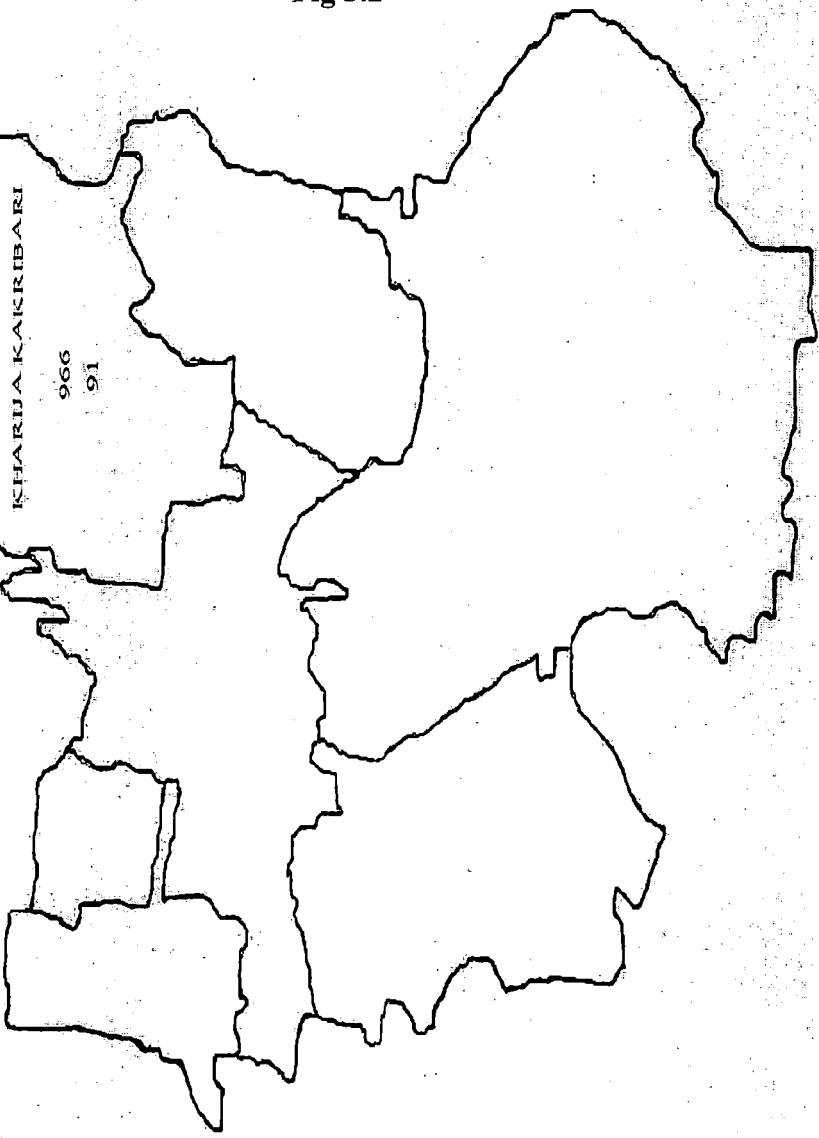


Fig 3.2

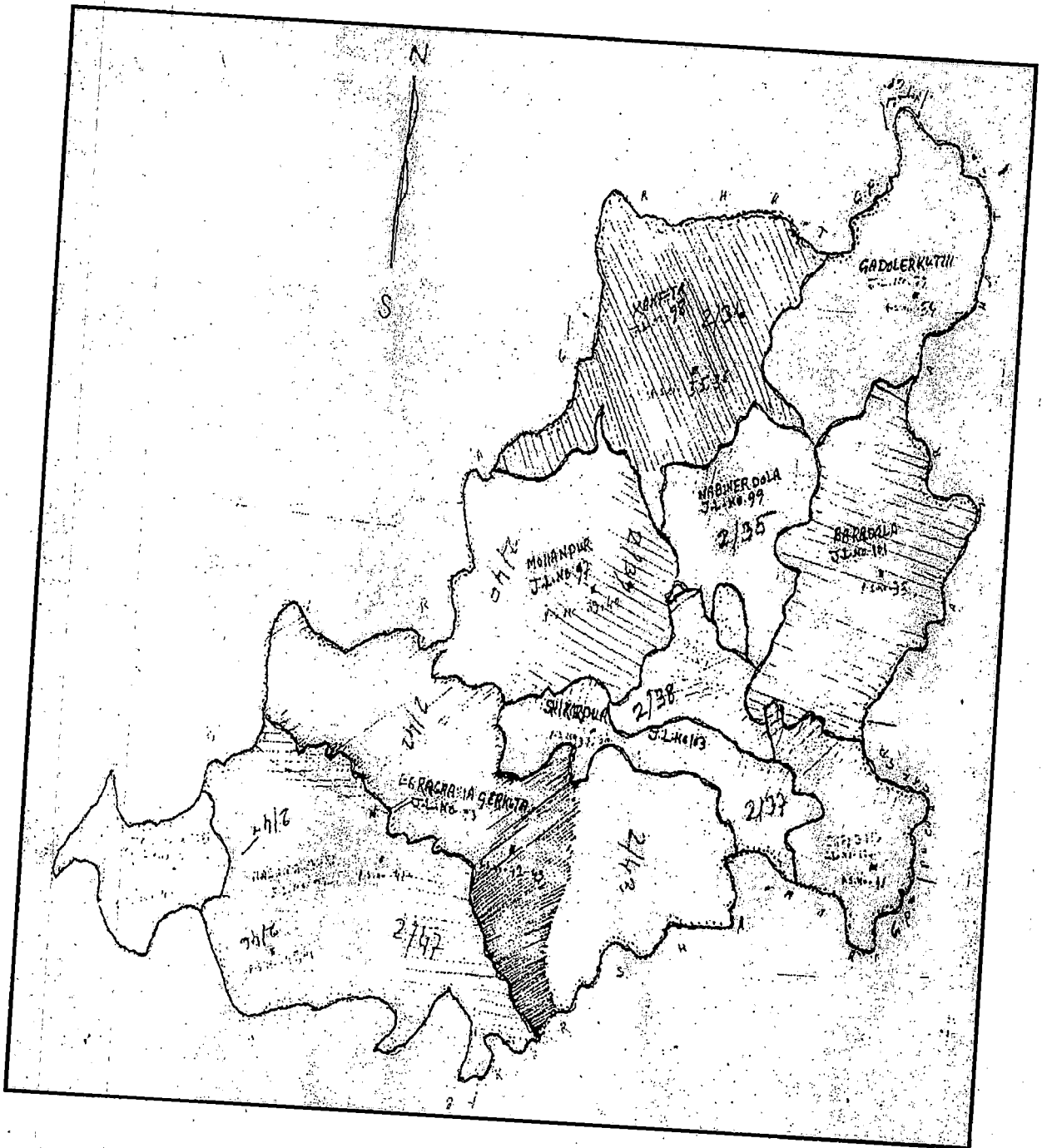
Tube wells, R.L.I. Ponds, Sub marginal Pumps, Hand Pump Tube wells etc. Cropping intensity is 200 percent. Most of the agricultural families belong to small and marginal farmers. Under the area of this Panchayat, there are 2 Health Centres, 2 Nationalised Bank Branches, 1 Co-operative Society, 1 pure drinking Water Project, 1 hut⁽⁶⁾ managed by Marketing Society and another daily market managed by Gram Panchayat. Industrial activities are almost absent. As a result, employment opportunities are highly limited.

ii) Sikarpur Gram Panchayat.

Sikarpur gram panchayat is under Mathabhanga Block-II and covers 12 revenue villages. It has an area of 8363 acres and a population of 17372⁽⁷⁾. Male and female population are 8981 and 8391 (51.69 and 48.30 percent respectively). There has been marked a high concentration of Scheduled Caste population in this area (75.70 percent). The literacy rate in this G.P. is much lower than that of Khagrabari G.P. because of non-availability of educational facilities. The rate of literacy is only 30.75 percent. Women literacy is miserable (only 9.3 percent). "Momonpur Sabitry Vidyamandir" is only the Higher Secondary School of the locality. Other than this there are 1 Junior High School, 15 Primary Schools in the area of this G.P.⁽⁸⁾ Recently much emphasis has been given on literacy program to make the villagers literate.

The area of the Panchayat is 8363 acres. The net cultivated area is 6690 acres (80.00 percent). The rest 1673 acres (nearly 20.00 percent) are used as homestead roads and canals. Lack of assured irrigation facilities are the main constrains that stands on the way of agricultural development. Irrigation land is accounted only 1100 acres (16.44 percent). The main source of irrigation are shallow tube wells, Deep-tube wells, R.L.I., sub marginal pumps, hand pumps tube wells, ponds etc. Paddy namely Amon is the main crop of this G.P. There has been marked the preponderance of food crops other than cash crops in the area. As cash crops farmers are interested to produce potato, tobacco, mustered and other different kinds of vegetables. The cropping

Fig 3.3
Sikarbur Gram Panchavat.



intensity is 186 percent. The main crops grown in this G.P. are Aman, Aus and Boro paddy, wheat, Jute, potato, mustered, tobacco and different other vegetables. Table 3.12 shows the gross cropped area under principal crops.

Table-3.12

Table 3.13 shows the gross cropped area under principal crops

Name of the Crops	Area in Acres	Percentage of the gross Cropped Area
Aman Paddy	5721	45.95
Aus Paddy	2207	17.73
Boro Paddy	773	6.21
Jute	1676	13.46
Wheat	451	3.63
Potato	391	3.15
Mustard	321	2.58
Tobacco	412	3.31
Other Vegetables	497	3.99
Total	12449	100.00

Source: Official records, Agricultural Extension Office, Mathabhanga Block-II, Cooch Behar.

In the area of the Panchayat there are 4 health centres, 2 Co-operative Societies, 1 branch post office, 4 hats, 1 branch of gramin bank, 1 open stage, 1 cultivating centre⁽⁹⁾. Industrial activity is totally absent in this G.P. Agriculture is the main pursuit of the villagers.

d) Political Representation in the Sample Gram Panchayats:

i) Khagrabari Gram Panchayat-Party representation:

Khagrabari gram panchayat is under the block Cooch Behar-II. It is 4 Km. away from the district town Cooch Behar. All six villages under this G.P. are situated within the distance of 5 to 6 Km. from the office of the G.P. In every panchayat election, left front mainly CPI (M) has proved its strong political control over the electorates. The electoral growth of CPI (M) is mainly for the work of its three mass front active in the area - Krishak Samiti, the DYFI and Ganatrantik Mahila Samiti. Left

front's agrarian policy mainly land reform gave larger security to the sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and marginal farmers among the Villagers of the G.P. Moreover, they have the strong feeling that the Party CPI (M) is a Pro-people Party. The electorates of this area are highly conscious politically. In spite of pre-dominance of agriculture this G.P. is comparatively developed than that of Sikarpur in respect of infrastructure facilities, educational facilities and basic amenities. Prior to panchayat election in the year 1978 the party Cong(I) had a good control over the villages of this area. After launching Panchayat election, lack of fair and dynamic leadership as well as organisational immaturity was proved vividly. Presently the organisational base of the party Cong. (I) is eroded largely. On the other hand Left Front mainly CPI (M) has proved its political control strongly. The picture is delineated in table 3.13

Table-3.13
Khagrabari Gram Panchayat – Party representation

Year	Party	CPI(M)	FB	INC	BJP	Total
1998		14	4	3	2	23
1993		12	2	8	3	25
1988		18	-	4	-	22
1983		10	2	8	-	20
1978		8	5	1	-	14

Source: Office of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat.

It is evident from the table that in 1978 panchayat election only 1 seat was owned by the opposition party Cong(I). Reflecting organisational maturity it won 8 seats in 1983 election. For organisational disintegration Cong(I) lost 4 seats in 1988 panchayat election. In 1993 panchayat election the main opposition party Cong(I) gained 8 seats again for their popular and honest candidates. The last panchayat election in year 1998 again saw the hopeless and disappointing results of the party Cong(I). The party only won 3 seats and most of the candidates of the party Cong(I) were defeated in election battle for the strong allegation of corruption against them. As a

new emergent party BJP had secured 3 seats in 1993-panchayat election followed by 2 in the year 1998. It is worthwhile to mention here that the occupancy of 3 seats by BJP in the year 1993 and 2 seats in the year 1998 were largely due to some organisational network in the villages of this area and the wave of BJP Govt. at the Centre. Presently both have been disappeared mostly. On the other hand in the year 1978 panchayat election LF secured 13 seats followed by 12 in the year 1983, followed by 18 in the year 1988, followed by 14 in the year 1993 and 18 in the year 1998. As a reflection of strong organisational base CPI (M) alone secured 8 seats in the year 1978, followed by 10 in the year 1983, 18 in the year 1988, 12 in the year 1993 and 14 in the year 1998. Thus Khagrabari gram panchayat is absolutely dominated by the CPI (M) members.

ii) Sikarpur Gram Panchayat-Party Representation:

Sikarpur gram panchayat is under the block Mathabhanga-II. It is 42 K.M. away from the district town, Cooch Behar and 10 K.M. away from Subdivision town, Mathabhanga. Sikarpur G.P. is different in number of ways from that of Khagrabari. Most of the Villages under this G.P. are highly dominated and concentrated by scheduled caste people. This G.P. is backward in comparison to Khagrabari in respect of education, basic amenities, and infrastructure advantages. Pre-dominance of agriculture is the main attribute of this G.P. LF's agrarian policy to a larger extent is implemented in this area to give security to the economically backward classes. The C.P.I.(M) party has the strongest hold in all the villages under this G.P. The Krisak Sava, D.Y.F., Mahila Ganatrantrik Samiti are also the prominent branch institutions of C.P.I.(M), party. It is worthwhile to mention here that the main opposition party Cong(I) has no any organisation in this area. As a new emergent party, B.J.P. & T.M.C. have extended some organisational strength in the villages of Sikarpur G.P. recently. As its reflection in 1998 panchayat election, both B.J.P. & T.M.C. secured 6 seats out of total 16 seats. Not only the wave of those parties help to secure such number of seats but also there were strong complaints against the contesting candidates of C.P.I.(M). Thus in 1998 panchayat

election the electorate of Sikarpur G.P. voted for B.J.P. and Trinamul candidates. Forward Block has no organisational base and was unable to send any representative since the birth of three tiers panchayati raj system in the year 1978. CPI (M) occupied 15 seats out of a total of 15 seats in 1978. In 1983 CPI (M) occupied 13 seats whereas 2 went to Con (I). In 1988 CPI (M) got 16 seats whereas Cong(I) got only one seat. In 1993 out of 21 seats one went to BJP and 20 was occupied by CPI (M). In 1998 Panchayat election organisational maturity of CPI (M) was dislocated and won 10 seats, 3 went to BJP and 3 went to TMC. From the overall picture it appears that Sikarpur gram panchayat is absolutely dominated by CPI (M) party. Table 3.14 will speak the truth.

Table-3.14
Political Representation of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat

Year	Party	CPI(M)	INC	FB	BJP	TMC	Total
1998		10	-	-	3	3	16
1993		20	-	-	1	-	21
1988		16	1	-	-	-	17
1983		13	2	-	-	-	15
1978		15	-	-	-	-	15

Source: Office of the Sikarpur Gram Panchayat.

Summary:

Cooch Behar is the northeastern district of Jalpaiguri division and forms a part of Himalayan Terai of West Bengal. It lies between the parallel 25°57'40" and 26°32'20"-north latitude in the Northern Hemisphere. The eastern most extremity of the district is marked by 89°54'35" east longitude and its western most extremity is by 88°47'40" east longitude. The area of the district is 3387sq. Kms. The district consists of five sub-divisions, 10 police stations, 12 blocks, 12 Panchayat Samities, 128-gram panchayats and 6 municipalities.

The district shows steady increase in population over census periods, 1951-1991 (Table 3.2) As per 1991 census total population of the district is 2171145 of which rural population is 2001648 (92.18%)

and urban population is 169497 (7.81%). There is a high concentration of Scheduled Caste population in the district 51.76 percent (Table 3.4) and percentage of Tribe population is very negligible (0.60%). Occupational distribution exhibits that 75.21 percent of main workers in the district are engaged in agricultural sector. Only 5.92 are engaged in household industry, manufacturing & repairing works. Other workers including services accounted to 18.85 percent. In census year 1991, percentage of literacy in the district is 45.78 percent of which male literacy rate is a sharp increase in the literacy rate in the district.

Regarding cropping pattern table 3.7 discloses the preponderance of food crops and the entire agricultural economy largely depends on paddy, wheat, Jute, Tobacco and Potato. On an average 66 percent of the gross cropped area are under Aman paddy to total cultivation. Proportion of area under cultivation seems to have a declining trend. Potato, a profitable commercial crop occupies an important position in the district. Agriculture development of Cooch Behar is handicapped by the inadequate irrigation facilities. Only 13.58 percent of the gross cropped area can avail irrigation facilities. Fertiliser consumption per hectare of the gross cropped area exhibits a rising trend (138.28 Kg.) but it is much lower than the south Bengal average.

Regarding socio-economic profile of the two select gram panchayats viz Khagrabari & Sikarpur of the district we see that Khagrabari G.P is comparatively more developed than that of Sikarpur. Khagrabari G.P. consists of six revenue villages having population, 23703 of which 37 percent are scheduled caste population. The number of literate persons is 14221 (60%). Better educational facilities are available here. There are 13 Primary, 2 Secondary, and 2 Higher Secondary Schools. The main crops grown in the villages of the G.P are Aman, Aus, Boro, Jute, wheat Potato, vegetables are largely grown here. Total cultivation is 57.91 percent of which irrigation areas is 45.79 percent. On the other hand Sikarpur G.P. consists of 12 revenue blocks

having population of 17372 of which SC population accounted to 75.70 percent. The rate of the literacy is 30.75 percent of which women literacy is only 9.3 percent. There are 15 Primary, 1 Junior and 1 Higher Secondary School in the locality. The main crops grown in this G.P. are – Aman, Aus, Boro, Wheat, Jute, Potato, Tobacco and other different vegetables. Net cultivated area is 80 percent of which irrigated area accounted to only 16.44 percent.

In the district of Cooch Behar, left front particularly CPI (M) has one of its strongest bases both in terms of popular support and in terms of organisational maturity which has been reflected in last five panchayat elections 1978-1998 (Table-3.10). In 1978 panchayat election LF got 75.43 percent seats in gram panchayat, 88.88 percent, seats in panchayat samiti and 100 percent seats in Zilla Parishad. In the subsequent panchayat elections, same picture was reflected.

CPI (M) has also proved its strongest political control in the selected gram panchayats viz Khagrabari & Sikarpur over last five panchayat elections. Both the gram panchayats are absolutely dominated by the CPI (M) panchayat members (Table-3.13 & 3.14). It is mainly for the work of its three mass front active in the area- Krishak Samiti, the DYFI, Ganatrantik Mahila Samiti. Moreover, LF's agrarian policy gave large security to the sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and marginal farmer of the villages. Downtrodden villagers have the strong belief that party CPI (M) is a pro-people party.

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9. Ibid, P-4.

Chapter-IV

Caste, Class and Power Structure of the Panchayat Members in Respect to Rural Development in a Backward Region Cooch Behar.

Introduction:

Panchayati Raj Institutions based on adult franchise is aimed at not only increasing local participation in rural development programmes but also establishing an egalitarian power structure by breaking the traditional power structure in rural areas ⁽¹⁾. These institutions are designed to empower the poor to bring the poor collectively into the process of local government and rural development ensuring their adequate representation in power structure⁽²⁾. Earlier since the formation of the Panchayat system in the late 1950s the big landlords controlled the power structure in the countryside and people of higher caste. Scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, small peasants, agricultural labourers and other poorer sections of the society had not been expected to enter public arena on equal terms and they had not been given decision making power ⁽³⁾. In West Bengal, the LFG, through land reforms and Panchayat raj institutions has transferred the power in rural areas to small landowners and helped to generate social and political awareness among the people facilitating the development of new leadership ⁽⁴⁾. Prof. G.K. Lietaer from his study on Bardhaman district has proved that there has been marked increasing visibility of those groups who hitherto had been neglected to come into power structure and decision making ⁽⁵⁾. Neil Webster, from his study on Kanpur-II gram panchayat and Saldya gram panchayat in the same district observed that there is now significant representation in the gram panchayats from among the poorer and more marginal social groups ⁽⁶⁾. Prof. Arabinda Ghosh also concluded that there is adequate representation of the weaker sections in the power structure and the implementation and monitoring of all development programmes in the villages of the

district (Bardwan) have progressively been taken over by the organisations of poor themselves ⁽⁷⁾. Many other studies like an independent survey conducted by NIRD, Hyderabad on Nadia, Midnapore and Jalpaiguri districts proved that power structure in the villages still is dominated by middle and elite class ⁽⁸⁾. The official report of Mukharjee and Bandyopadhyay on the functioning of panchayets in West Bengal concluded that middle class new comers still occupy the key positions in power structure in the villages ⁽⁹⁾.

Keeping all studies in view and to arrive at positive conclusion, the present chapter on caste, class, & power structure of panchayat representatives in respect to rural development in a backward region Cooch Behar has been divided into two sections viz. Section-I & section – II. In section – I the matter is studied at macro level (district as a whole). In section – II, it is studied at micro level (with reference to two G.P.s).

Section – I

a) Caste of Gram Panchayat Members in the District of Cooch Behar.

Prior to 1978, higher caste – class character among the panchayat members was quite evident in the district of Cooch Behar. As the district is highly concentrated with the scheduled caste population so there has been a reasonable number of scheduled caste (Lower Caste) Panchayat members in the panchayat body. But the distinguishing feature is that they have sufficient landholding under their possession (nearly Jotedars). From 1978 panchayat election Power structure in rural areas of West Bengal had altered considerably. As a result, instead of empowering the already powerful panchayats placed power in the hands of the new comers who could be relied upon to implement land reforms measures faithfully ⁽¹⁰⁾. In the district of Cooch Behar also, from 1978 onwards, in the consecutive panchayat elections, as a policy of LFG mainly CPI (M), more non-Bhdrolok people of the lowest groups have been elected

as panchayat representatives and the ratio has been changed remarkably. There has been marked a breakdown of caste hierarchy to the working of the panchayat system.

In the district of Cooch Behar there are 128-gram panchayats. The total number of gram panchayat members is 1879. Cooch Behar Zilla Parishad had conducted a study in the 1998 on socio-economic conditions of the elected members of gram panchayats in the district. It was found from the study that there is remarkable representation of weaker sections namely lower caste people (SC) in the Gram panchayats of the Cooch Behar district. Table 4.1 shows 54.76 percent gram panchayat members belong to Scheduled caste and 44.92 percent members belong to general caste. Scheduled caste women representation accounted to 20.38 percent which is much higher than general caste women representation (15.01 percent). Thus caste system in the villages of Cooch Behar has lost significantly the stigmatic and discriminatory meaning. Analysing the place of caste in power structure we find that the lower caste people remarkably have come into power structure.

Table – 4.1
Representation of Weaker Sections in Gram Panchayats in Cooch Behar district (1998)

Caste	Women	Men	Total
Scheduled Caste	383 (20.38)	646 (34.38)	1029 (54.76)
Scheduled Tribe	2 (.11)	4 (.22)	6 (.32)
General Caste	282 (15.01)	562 (29.90)	844 (44.92)
Total	667 (35.50)	1212 (64.50)	1879 (100.00)

N.B- Parenthesis indicates percentages.

Source:- Study report of Cooch Behar Zilla Parishad (1998)

b) Class of the Panchayat Members :

The class of the panchayat members of the district of Cooch Behar has been studied in terms of i) land holding ii) occupation & iii) educational status.

i) **Land Holding:** Another dimension of rural power structure is seen in terms of control of land holding of the panchayat

representatives in the district. Until mid 1970 rich peasants and landlords had a big control over rural politics and power structure in rural areas of the district Cooch Behar. They remained at key position in power structure. The agrarian reform programmes of LFG has remarkably weakened the strong rich peasant bases in West Bengal and have protected and promoted the class interest of the weaker sections ⁽¹¹⁾. The district of Cooch Behar is not of its exception. From 1978 panchayat election it has become quite evident that majority panchayat representatives in the district of Cooch Behar now belong to weaker section. Their direct involvement in planning and implementation in rural development programmes restructured the old power relations in the villages and let to tremendous politicisation of the poorer sections in the villages of Cooch Behar. Table 4.2 shows the landholding pattern in the family of gram panchayat members of Cooch Behar district. It is seen that 11.70 percent of them are from landless family, 4.2 percent belong to the patta holders and 54.95 percent have a family holding of land upto 2.49 acres (marginal farmers). On the other hand 20.99 percent of them hold land in the range of 2.49 to 4.59 acres, 6.89 percent in the range of 5.0 to 9.99 acres and only 1.27- percent hold land 10 acres and above.

Table – 4.2
Family Wise Land Holding of the Gram
Panchayat Members of the Cooch Behar District (1998).

Land Holding	Number
Landless	220 (11.70)
Patta – Holders	79 (4.20)
Up to 2.49 acres	1033 (54.95)
2.5 to 4.99 acres	394 (20.99)
5 to 9.99 acres	129 (6.89)
10 acres & above	24 (.27)
Total	1879 (100.00)

N.B –Parenthesis
indicates percentages

Source:- Study report of Cooch Behar Zilla
Parishad (1998)

Thus table 4.2 confirms the significant representation of poor people in the gram panchayats of Cooch Behar district.

ii) **Occupation:** Occupational categories are considered as an indicator to understand the class background of the elected representatives in the panchayat body. It will also help us to see the changing class character in public life and whether there is adequate representation of poor people in the rural power structure & decision making or not. Table 4.3 shows the occupational categories of the gram panchayat members in the district of Cooch Behar.

Table – 4.3
Distribution of members of Gram Panchayats in Cooch Behar District according to Occupational Categories(1998).

Occupation	Number
Agricultural Labourers	85 (4.57)
Bargadars	21(1.12)
Marginal Cultivators	1103(58.70)
Rural Artisans	25(1.35)
Fishermen	8(.45)
Animal Husbandry	4(.23)
Small Shop owners	48(2.55)
Other Business	124(6.60)
Teachers	114(6.07)
Other Services	122(6.45)
Students	7(.37)
Others	62(3.29)
Unemployed	133(7.05)
Social Workers	23(1.20)
Total	1879(100)

N.B –Parenthesis indicates percentages

Source:- Official records of Cooch Behar Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Election, 1998.

It is found from the above table 4.3 that 58.70 percent of the gram panchayat members are marginal farmers, 4.57 percent are agricultural labourers and bargadars are only 1.12 percent. Marginal farmers, agricultural labourers & bargadars combinely accounted to 64.39 percent. Only 6.07 percent gram panchayat members are schoolteachers. As the district is absolutely rural in nature and agriculture is the main pursuit of the people of Cooch Behar so most of the gram panchayat members are from agricultural sector having lower economic status. Thus

table 4.3 confirms the alarming representation of the poor people in rural power structure in the district.

iii) Educational Status: - Educational status is highly correlated with caste, class character of the individuals. It is normally presumed that literacy rates and educational levels are usually high among the socially and economically better groups and dominant castes would certainly exhibit higher literacy. On the other hand educational level are usually low among the socially and economically disadvantaged groups and lower caste would certainly exhibit lower literacy and educational levels ⁽¹²⁾. So, it is pertinent to see the educational status of gram panchayat members in the district of Cooch Behar.

Table 4.4 shows that 39.43 percent of the gram panchayat members have an educational qualification upto upper primary level, 21.29 percent upto lower primary level, 18.37 percent upto secondary level, 8.5 percent upto higher secondary level, 7.65 percent are post graduates. So from the educational status of the gram panchayat members. It is evident that power structure in panchayats is heavily in favour of lower classes who have low educational status and who emerge from the locally lower castes.

Table-4.4
Educational Status of Gram Panchayat Members in Cooch Behar District. (1998).

Educational Status	Number
Illiterates	6(.30)
Neo- literate	23(1.20)
Literates	39(2.09)
Upper Primay	740(39.43)
Lower Primary	400(21.20)
Secondary	345(18.37)
H.S.	161(8.55)
Graduates	141(7.65)
Post Graduates	21(1.12)
Total	1879(100.00)

N.B –Parenthesis indicates percentages

Source:- Official records of the Cooch Behar Zilla Parishad results of panchayat election, Cooch Behar 1998.

Section -II

c) Caste of Gram Panchayat Members in Khagrabari G.P.

Khagrabari gram panchayat (in Cooch Behar Block-II) is relatively more developed than that of Sikarpur gram panchayat (in Mathabhanga Block-II). Here we find higher numerical strength of general caste population (63 percent) than that of scheduled caste population (37 percent) ⁽¹³⁾. There are a good number of higher caste Hindu families namely Brahmin families in this G.P. In different consecutive panchayat election it had been found that most of the candidates have been elected mainly from CPI (M) party having low social and economic status as opposed to INC candidates being elected. Particularly in last two panchayat elections (1993-1998) the representation of the Sc. Candidate (Lowest in caste hierarchy) was remarkable. In 1978 panchayat election 5 SC. candidates were elected (35.72 percent) and a candidates were elected from general caste (64.29 percent). In 1983 the percentage of SC. representation increased to (40.00 percent) i.e. out of 20 seats, 8 candidates were elected from SC. category In 1988, 13 candidates were elected form general caste (59.09 percentage) and 9 candidates were elected from lowest graded group (40.90 percent). In 1993 panchayat election 14 SC. Candidates were elected (56.00 percent) and 11 candidates were elected from general caste (44 percent). In last panchayat election of 1998, the percentage of SC. representation was 52.18 percent. So, it is quite evident that there is adequate representation of lowest graded groups (in caste hierarchy) in Khagrabari G.P. Table 4.5 will speak for the truth.

Table 4.5
Representation of Weaker Sections in Khagrabari Gram Panchayat in different Panchayat election (1978 – 1998).

Election Years	General Caste	Scheduled Caste	Total Seat
1978	9 (64.29)	5(35.71)	14
1983	12(60.00)	8(40.00)	20
1988	13(59.00)	9(40.90)	22
1993	11(44.00)	14(56.00)	25
1998	11(47.82)	12(52.18)	23

N.B –Parenthesis indicates percentages Source: - Official records of Khagrabari G.P.

d) Class of the Gram Pnchayat Members in Khagrabri G.P.

The class of panchayat members in the sample G.P.s viz. Khagrabari & Sikarpur has also been studied in terms of i) Landholding ii) Occupation & iii) educational Status.

- i) **Land Holding:** Khagrabari gram panchayat is absolutely dominated by CPI (M) panchayat members (previously shown in chap-3). The study of economic background of gram panchayat members in this G.P. reveals that there is significant representation of poor people in power structure. Most of the panchayat members are from landless families. A reasonable representation is shown from marginal farmers. The representation of middle and big farmers who had an absolute control over local policies and rural power structure are almost absent in this G.P. Table 4.6 shows the landholding pattern of the gram panchayat members in Khagrabari G.P. In 1978 panchayat election representation of landless families was 50 percent followed by 60 percent in 1983. In 1988 the representation of landless families again was 59.09 percent followed by 56 percent in 1993. In the last panchayat election of 1998 the representation of landless families was accounted to 65.22 percent. On the other hand, marginal farmer's

representation in the year 1978, was 21.43 percent followed by 25 percent in 1983 and 27.27 in 1988. In 1993 panchayat election marginal farmer's representation was accounted to 28.00 percent followed by 26.08 percent in 1998. The representation of landless families and the members having land upto 2.49 acres combinely accounted to 71.43 percent in 1978 followed by 85 percent in 1983 and 86.36 percent in 1988. In 1993 and 1998, this combined representation accounted to 84.00 & 91.30 percent respectively. Thus it can be concluded that Khagrabari G.P. is highly represented by poor.

Table 4.6
Land Holding Pattern of the Gram Panchayat Members in Khagrabari G.P

Size of Landholding	No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.	
	1978	%	1983	%	1988	%	1993	%
Land Less	7	50.00	12	60.00	13	59.09	14	56.00
Upto 2.49 acres	3	21.43	5	25.00	6	27.27	7	28.00
2.5 to 4.49 acres	2	14.29	1	5.00	2	9.09	2	8.00
5 to 9.99 acres	1	7.14	-	-	1	4.55	1	4.00
10 acres & above	1	7.14	2	10.00	-	-	1	4.00
Total	14	100.00	20	100.00	22	100.00	25	100.00
							23	100.00

Source :

- 1) Official records of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat 1978-1998
- 2) Official records of Block Development Office, 1978-1998

ii) **Occupation:** The panchayat member's occupations, as the indicator of their class location, better reveals the socio-economic background of the members. In Khagrabri gram panchayat, we find the presence of different occupational categories such as marginal & small peasants, agricultural & other labourers, medium & big peasants, teachers, small shop owners & small business, unemployed, housewives & other services. In the last five Panchayat elections (1978-1980), the representation of elected members in this G.P. mostly have come from the occupational background of marginal & small peasants, housewives, teachers, small shop owners & small business, unemployed. In last two panchayat elections, housewives representation was quite prominent because of female candidate reservation (33 per cent of total seats). It is worth noting here that most of the elected housewife members have come from the families of marginal peasant and landless families. The representation of agricultural & others labourers is not satisfactory. Medium & big peasant's representation has been reduced considerably. In the last five panchayat elections (1978-1998), it was found from the table 4.7. that on an average 22.70 percent of the gram Panchayat members are marginal & small peasants, 20.75 per cent are housewives, 14.81 percent are teachers, 10.69 percent are small shop owners & small business, 10.20 percent are unemployed, 9.71 percent are other services, 8.41 percent are agricultural labourers, 7.87 percent are other labourers, 7.43 percent are medium and big peasants. So, the occupational pattern of panchayat members in Khagrabari G.P. highly confirms the adequate representation of poor people in power structure. Table 4.7 Speaks for the truth.

Table- 4.7
Occupational Distribution of Gram Panchayat Members in Khagrabari G.P (1978-1998)

Size of Landholding	No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.			
	1978	%	1983	%	1988	%	1993	%		
Agricultural Labours	-	-	-	-	1	4.55	3	12.00	2	8.70
Other Labours	2	14.29	1	5.00	-	-	-	-	1	4.34
Marginal & small peasants	4	28.57	5	25.00	6	27.27	6	24.00	2	8.70
Medium & big peasants	2	14.29	2	10.00	1	4.55	1	4.00	1	4.34
Teachers	2	14.29	4	20.00	5	22.72	1	4.00	3	13.04
Students	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Small shop owners & small business	1	7.14	4	20.00	3	13.04	1	4.00	2	8.70
Unemployed	1	7.14	1	5.00	4	18.18	3	12.00	2	8.70
House wives	1	7.14	-	-	2	9.09	8	32.00	8	34.78
Other services	1	7.14	3	15.00	-	-	2	8.00	2	8.70
Total	14	100.00	20	100.00	22	100.00	25	100.00	23	100.00

Source : 1) Official records of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat 1978-1998
2) Official records of Block Development Office, 1978-1998

iii) Educational Status: The link of education with human capital and with human capabilities has been emphasised in recent development literature. In both areas education plays a crucial role in village dynamics and power relations⁽¹⁴⁾. As such the analysis of educational status of gram panchayat members in the sample G.Ps is highly significant.

Analysing the educational status of gram panchayat members in Khagrabari G.P. we find that most of the panchayat members are well educated – secondary passed and graduate and also belong to general caste. Quite a reasonable number of members have been found from lower primary and upper Primary level. This G.P. is comparatively more developed than Sikarpur G.P. and better educational facilities are available here. Table 4.8 shows the educational status of the gram Panchayat members in Khagrabari G.P. over last five panchayat elections (1978-1998).

It is found from the table 4.8 that members having educational qualification secondary & graduate level combined accounted to 35.71 percent in 1978, followed by 45 percent in 1983, followed by 61.18 percent in 1988. In 1993 it was accounted to 48 percent followed by 65.23 in 1998. On the other hand members having qualification lower primary and upper primary level combinely accounted to 57.14 percent in 1978, followed by 40 percent in 1983, followed by 22.73 percent in 1998. In 1993 it was accounted to 48 percent followed by 30.42 percent in 1998. There is no illiterate panchayat member.

Table 4.8
Educational Status of Gram Panchayat Members in KHAGRABARI G.P.

Educational Status	No. of Members		No. of Members		No. of Members		No. of Members		No. of Members	
	1978	%	1983	%	1988	%	1993	%	1998	%
ILLITERATE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LITERATE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
LOWER PRIMARY	4	28.57	4	20.00	2	9.09	6	24.00	5	21.73
UPPER PRIMARY	4	28.57	4	20.00	3	13.64	6	24.00	2	8.69
SECONDARY	3	21.43	5	25.00	8	36.36	5	20.00	7	30.43
HIGHER SECONDARY	1	7.15	3	15.00	2	9.09	1	4.00	1	4.35
GRADUATE	2	14.28	4	20.00	7	31.82	7	28.00	8	34.80
POST GRADUATE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	14	100.00	20	100.00	22	100.00	25	100.00	23	100.00

Source :- Official record of the Gram Panchayat for the years.

On an average, 26.64 percent members are secondary, 25.78 percent are graduate, 21.54 percent are lower primary, 18.98 percent are upper Primary & 8.80 percent are Higher Secondary. Thus it is quite evident that the local leaders who are in Power structure have good educational background.

e) Caste of Gram Panchayat Members in Sikarpur G.P. : Sikarpur gram Panchayat (in Mathabhanga Block-II) is highly concentrated with scheduled caste population 75.70 percent.⁽¹⁵⁾ Here we find a good number of Muslim families. CPI (M) has a strong hold over this gram panchayat and almost all panchayat members had been elected on CPI (M) ticket with low economic profile. On the other hand INC has no organisational base here. Most of the Muslim families are the supporters of INC having higher economic profile. The results of different panchayat elections (1978-998) in Sikarpur G.P. exhibits that the under privileged class has been institutionalised into power structure by breaking the traditional hierarchy and the increasing role of lower castes in public life has been ensured to a significant extent. In 1978 panchayat election, out of 15 seats, 14 candidates were elected from SC community (93.33 percent) and 1 candidate was elected from general caste (Muslim). In 1983 the representation of SC candidates was accounted to (60 percent) whereas general caste representation was (40 percent). Out of 6 general candidates elected 4 were from high Hindu caste and rest 2 were from Muslim caste. In 1988 representation of SC candidates was increased to 88.24 percent whereas general caste representation was only 11.78 percent. In this year two general caste candidates were elected from Muslim community. In 1993 out of total seats of 21, 19 were elected from SC community (90.47 percent) and rest two candidates were elected from Muslim Community (9.53 percent). In the last panchayat election of 1998 SC representation was accounted to 93.75 percent followed by general caste

representation is only (6.25 percent). In 1998 only 1 panchayat member was elected from general caste (Muslim).

So, from the above analysis it is quite evident that there is significant representation of SC members (lowest group in caste hierarchy) in Sikarpur gram panchayat. Table 4.9 delineates the fact.

Table 4.9

Representation of Gram Panchayat Members by their castes in Sikarpur Gram Panchayat.

Election Years	General Caste	Scheduled Caste	Total Seats
1978	1 (6.67)	14 (93.33)	15
1983	6 (40)	9 (60)	15
1988	2 (11.76)	15 (88.24)	17
1993	2 (9.52)	19 (90.48)	21
1998	1 (6.25)	15 (93.75)	16

N.B. Parenthesis indicates percentages

Source: Official records of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat.

e) Class of the Panchayat Members in Sikarpur G.P. :

- i) **Land Holding:** - Sikarpur gram panchayat is also highly represented by CPI (M) Panchayat members over five panchayat elections held to date (1978-1998). The class location of the elected panchayat members in terms of

Table 4.10
Land Holding Pattern of the Gram Panchayat Members in Sikarpur G. P. (1978-1998)

Size of Landholding	No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.	
	1978	%	1983	%	1988	%	1993	%	1998	%
Land Less	-	-	-	-	1	5.88	2	9.52	2	12.50
Upto 2.49 acres	3	20.00	4	26.66	4	23.53	6	28.57	5	31.25
2.5 to 4.49 acres	6	40.00	7	46.67	6	35.29	9	42.86	6	37.50
5 to 9.99 acres	4	26.67	3	20.00	5	29.42	4	19.05	3	18.75
10 acres & above	2	13.33	1	6.67	1	5.88	-	-	-	-
Total	15	100.00	20	100.00	22	100.00	25	100.00	23	100.00

Source : 1) Official records of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat 1978-1998
2) Official records of Block Development Office, 1978-1998

land holding in this GP exhibits a different picture than that of Khagrabari G.P. firstly, here we find that most of the members are marginal and small peasants instead of landless. Cultivation is their principal occupation of livelihood. Secondly majority of them belong to scheduled caste community. A sizeable minority representation has been found from middle peasants. Big farmer's representation gradually declined and in last two panchayat elections (1993-1998) it became absent. Table 4.10 shows the landholding patterns of the gram Panchayat members in Sikarpur G.P. over successive panchayat elections. 60 percent panchayat members have land upto 4.49 acres in 1978 followed by 73.33 percent in 1983 and 58.82 percent in 1988. In the year 1993 this figure accounted to 71.43 percent followed by 68.75 percent in 1988. On the other hand members holding land in the range of 5 to 9.9 acres accounted to 26.67 percent in 1978, followed by 20 percent in 1983, 29.42 percent in 1988, followed by 19.05 percent in 1993 and 18.75 percent in 1998, members holding land 10 acres & above accounted to 13.33 percent in 1978, followed by 6.67 percent in 1983, and 5.88 percent in 1988. Members from landless family had no representation in first two panchayat elections. In 1988, this representation was 5.88 percent, followed by 9.52 in 1993 and 12.50 percent in 1998. So, it may be concluded that this G.P. is also represented by the down trodden.

ii) Occupation: The occupational categories of gram panchayat members in Sikarpur G.P. in last panchayat elections show that this G.P. is absolutely represented by the cultivators. Among the cultivators mainly marginal and small cultivators predominated in all panchayat elections. Medium

**Table 4.11
Occupational distribution of Gram Panchayat members in SIKARPUR G.P. (1978-1998)**

Size of Landholding	No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.		No. of members.	
	1978	%	1983	%	1988	%	1993	%	1998	%
Agricultural Labours	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other Labours	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Marginal & small peasants	9	60.00	10	66.66	10	58.82	10	47.62	6	37.50
Medium & big peasants	6	40.00	3	20.00	4	23.53	2	9.53	2	12.50
Teachers	-	-	1	6.67	3	17.65	1	4.76	1	6.25
Students	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Small shop owners & small business	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Unemployed	-	-	1	6.67	-	-	-	-	1	6.25
House wives	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	33.33	6	37.50
Other services	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	4.76	-	-
Total	15	100.00	15	100.00	17	100.00	21	100.00	23	100.00

Source : 1) Official records of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat 1978-1998
2) Official records of Block Development Office, 1978-1998.

and big farmer's representation gradually shows a declining trend. In comparison to Khagrabari G.P. here we find relatively richer farmers are in power structure. There is no representation of members from landless families, agricultural & other labourers or small shop owners & small businessmen. Teacher's representation is negligible. All of them are primary school teachers. They are also cultivators but they rarely work in the fields themselves merely supervising the work of hired labour. Housewives representation is quite promising from the panchayat election of 1993 because of female candidate reservation in panchayat body. Mostly the female candidates have come from the families of marginal and small farmers. Table 4.1 shows the occupational background of the gram panchayat members in last panchayat elections (1978-1998) in Sikarpur G.P. It is found from the table that on an average 54.12 percent gram panchayat members are marginal and small peasants, 21.11 percent are medium and big peasant, 7.06 percent are teachers, 6.46 percent are unemployed, 35.41 percent are housewives. Thus, the occupational pattern of the gram panchayat members in Sikarpur G.P. also confirms the poor people's representation in power structure.

iii) Educational Status: The educational background of the gram Panchayat members in Sikarpur G.P. exhibits somewhat different picture than that of Khagrabari G.P. This G.P. is comparatively more under developed and better educational facilities are not available here. Almost all panchayat members in this G.P. belong to schedule caste community and their educational status is much lower than Khagrabari G.P. Majority of panchayat members has been found from the

Table 4.12
Distributions of Gram Panchayat Members by Educations in SIKARPUR G. P. (1978-98)

Educational Status	No. of Members 1978		No. of Members 1983		No. of Members 1988		No. of Members 1993		No. of Members 1998	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Illiterate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Literate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lower primary	4	27.00	4	26.67	3	17.65	2	9.52	2	12.50
Upper primary	11	73.00	7	46.66	9	52.94	14	66.67	11	68.75
Secondary	-	-	3	20.00	4	23.53	3	14.29	2	12.50
Higher secondary	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Graduate	-	-	1	6.67	1	5.88	2	9.52	1	6.25
Post graduate	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	15	100.00	15	100.00	17	100.00	21	100.00	16	100.00

Source :- 1) Official records of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat (1978-1998)
2) Official records of Block Development Office(1978-1998)

educational qualification upto upper primary level. A good number of panchayat members have been found from the educational qualification of lower primary and secondary level. Very few members are found having qualification upto graduation level. There is no illiterate panchayat member. Table 4.12 shows the educational background of the panchayat members in Sikarpur G.P. over last five panchayat elections (1978-1998).

It is found from the table that members having educational background upto upper primary level alone accounted to 73 percent in 1978, followed by 46.66 percent in 1983 and 52.94 percent in 1988. In 1993 it was accounted to 66.67 percent, followed by 68.75 percent in 1998. On the other hand, members having educational background of lower primary and upper primary level combinely accounted to 100 percent in 1978, followed by 73.33 percent 1983 and 70.59 percent in 1988. In 1993 it was accounted to 76.19 percent, followed by 81.25 percent. So, it is quite evident that the members having relatively lower educational status than that of Khagrabari G.P dominate Sikarpur G.P.

On an average 61.60 percent members have educational background upto upper primary, 18.66 percent are lower primary, 17.58 percent are secondary and 7.08 percent are graduate.

Summary:

This chapter focuses light on caste, class and power structure of the Panchayat members in respect to rural development in a backward district Cooch Behar. Both from macro & micro level studies it has become quite evident that there is remarkable representation of weaker section people in rural power structure in the district. Regarding caste of the Panchayat member's table 4.1 shows that 54.76 percent gram panchayat members belong to scheduled caste and 44.76 percent belong to general caste.

Scheduled caste women representation accounted to 20.28 percent which is much higher than general caste women representation (15.01 percent). Thus lower caste people remarkable have come in power structure and caste system in the villages of Cooch Behar has lost significantly the stigmatic and discriminatory meaning.

The class character of the Panchayat representatives in terms of landholding, occupation and educational status (Tables 4.2, 4.3, 4.4) also provide alarming results. Regarding landholding pattern in the family of gram panchayat members it has been observed that 11.70 percent are from landless family; 4.2 percent are patta holders; and 54.95 percent have a land upto 2.29 acres (marginal farmers). In terms of occupational pattern marginal farmers, agricultural labourers & bargaders combinely accounted to 64.39 percent. Educational status of the gram panchayat members shows that 60.72 percent members have an educational qualification up to lower & upper primary level. So it can easily be concluded that rural power structure in the district of Cooch Behar is heavily in favour of weaker section who have low educational status and who emerge from the locally lower caste.

The same result has also been obtained at micro level with reference to two sample G.P.s of the district. Regarding caste of the panchayat representatives tables (4.5, 4.9) show that on an average 46 percent gram panchayat members in Khagrabari G.P. are scheduled caste whereas in Sikarpur it accounted to 85.16 percent in last five panchayat elections. It is quite evident that there is significant representation of lowest graded groups (in caste hierarchy) in both the G.P.s in rural power structure.

The class character of the panchayat members in terms of land holding and occupational distribution & educational status in the sample G.P.s also confirms the adequate representation of poor people in rural power structure and decision making on equal terms. In Khagrabari G.P. on an average 58.04 percent members belong to

landless families and 26.6 percent members have the landholding up to 2.49 acres (marginal farmers) in last five panchayat elections (Table 4.6). On the other hand, in Sikarpur G.P., on an average 66.46 percent members have the landholding up to 4.49 acres (marginal and small farmers) (Table 4.10). The representation of elected members in Khagrabari G.P. mostly have come from occupational background of marginal & small peasants (22.70%), housewives (20.75%); teachers (14.81%); small shop owner & small business (10.69%), unemployed (10.20%), other services (9.71%), agricultural labourers (8.41%) & other labourers (7.43%) (Table 4.7). Most of the elected housewife members have come from the families of marginal and landless farmers. On the other hand in Sikarpur, mostly the elected members have come from the occupational categories of marginal and small peasants (54.12%), medium & big peasants (21.11%), teachers (7.06%), unemployed (6.46%) & housewives (35.41%) (Table 4.11). In Khagrabari G.P. local leaders who are in power structure have better educational qualifications than that of Sikarpur G.P. In Khagrabari 26.64 percent members are secondary, 25.78 percent are graduate, 21.51 percent are lower primary, 18.98 percent are upper primary & 8.80 percent are H.S. (Table 4.8). On the other hand in Sikarpur, 61.60 percent members are upper primary; 18.66 percent are lower primary, 17.58 percent are secondary and 7.08 percent are graduates (Table 4.12).

Thus it may be concluded that through different panchayat elections it has become quite evident that majority panchayat representative in the district of Cooch Behar now belongs to weaker section and their direct involvement in different rural development programme restricted the old power relations in the villages with tremendous politicisation.

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Chapter-V

Panchayat Resources and Pattern of Expenditure on Development Activities with Special Reference to Cooch Behar District.

Introduction:

Finance is the lifeblood of any organisation. Without finance nothing can be done, no work or programme however well planned it might be, can be carried out if there is no fund available for the purpose. So finance is a necessary input for the proper functioning of P.R.I. One of the most crucial problems facing the panchayats in our country is that relating to the procurement of adequate financial resources for meeting their varied requirements. The success of these bodies depends on their financial resources and strength. These bodies can be effective only if these are provided with sufficient resources. According to the Taxation Enquiry Commission (1953-54)¹, the crux of the problem of local bodies is finance. The Santhanam Committee having studied the problem of Panchayat Raj finances observed, " Although PRI have the formidable list to function to discharge, they do not have the necessary financial resource to cope with these function. Therefore it is essential for the stability and growth of these institution that they should have substantial and growing resources which are entirely within their power to exploit and develop⁽²⁾ .

An attempt has been made in this chapter to discuss the resource position of two sample gram panchayats of the district of Cooch Behar and their pattern of expenditure on rural development over the years from 90-91 to 99-2000.

The resources of gram panchayats can be classified into (a) own resources (b) assigned revenue (c) Govt. grants.

Own resources comprise (i) own tax revenue (ii) own non-tax revenue (iii) fees, levy and duty.

Assigned revenue consist of (i) Land cess, (ii) Surcharge on stamp duty (iii) entertainment tax.

Government grants include (i) per capita grant (ii) purposive grant (iii) establishment grant.

a) Tax Revenue of Gram Panchayat: -

To make the P.R.I. bodies self-governing and self-reliant tax revenue has a greater role to play in shaping the financial structure of the panchayat. A panchayat can never be a self-governing institution if it is not made to mobilise a major part of its revenue. West Bengal panchayat Act 1973 provides revenue to be levied by the panchayat from house tax, fees, rates and tolls at such rate as may be prescribed by state govt. for registration of vehicles, providing sanitary arrangement at such places of worship, pilgrimage, for running trade (wholesale or retail) for ferry under the management of the gram panchayat, for lighting rate where arrangement for lighting of public streets and place is made by G.P. for grazing cattle on growing land under the management of G.P., for use of burning ghat under the management of G.P.

(i) House Tax Revenue of the Sample Panchayats:

The West Bengal panchayat act, 1973 made compulsorily the levy of house tax by panchayats. Section 46 of West Bengal panchayat (Amendment) act 1997 laid down that "a gram panchayat shall impose yearly a tax on land and building within the local limits of its jurisdiction"⁽³⁾. Under this act house tax is levied on annual value of land and buildings which means an amount equal to six percent of the market value of land and buildings at the time of assessment estimated. Regarding the rate of tax it is laid down in the act that "one percent of the annual value of such lands and buildings when the annual value does not exceed rupees one thousand and two percent of the annual value of such land and building

when the annual value of such land and building exceeds rupees one thousand”⁽⁴⁾.

So, house tax constitutes an important source of revenue of the finances of panchayets. Panchayat earns a major portion of revenue from house tax. This is highlighted with the help of data of the two gram panchayates. With regard to the experience of Khagrabari gram panchayat house tax income gives miserable picture, which is presented in the table no 5.1. The percentage of income to total income declined from 96.80 percent in 90-91 to 10.44 percent to total income in 98-99. But the proceeds of house tax were increased in absolute terms during the years. The revenue increased by 56.60 percent over the years. The growth in revenue of house tax is caused by increased in rate of tax in the year 93 – 94 ⁽⁵⁾ and increase in number of houses assessed ⁽⁶⁾ for taxation purpose which was not done earlier. Over the period of 23 years the panchayat raised the levy of tax once only. The rate was increased to half percent in the year 1993-94⁷. As a result it is seen that proceeds of house tax continue to increase from this year. But the per capita revenue is not proportional to the per capita demand. It is merely 26 percent on an average during the last four years.

Next to Khagrabari gram panchayat, Sikarpur gram panchayat derives good amount of house tax revenue as it is shown in the table 5.1. Though the location of this G.P. is in remote distance the position of house tax revenue gives a better picture than Khagrabari. The proceeds of house tax were increased significantly. The revenue proceeds increased from Rs.1729 in 1990-91 to Rs. 40040 in 99-2000. It is almost 2216 times that of 1990. This is due to two reasons, which are similar to these of other

Table No. - 5.1
House Tax Revenue of Sikarpur and Khagrabari Gram Panchayat form 1990-91 to 99-2000

Year	KHAGRABARI					SIKARPUR				
	House Tax Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage of House Tax Revenue to Total Tax Revenue	Population estimates From 1991-2000	Per Capita Revenue	Per Capita Demand	House Tax Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage of House Tax Revenue to Total Tax Revenue	Population estimates Form 1991-2000	Per Capita Revenue	Per Capita Demand
1990-91	18992	100.00 (96.80)	23703	.80	1.61	1729	100 (15.93)	17372	.09	1.61
1991-92	15983	100.00 (94.08)	24177	.66	1.67	N.A.	N.A.	17719		1.67
1992-93	8783	74.36 (67.89)	24660	.35	1.79	729	100 (11.32)	18073	.04	1.79
1993-94	23301	88.02 (64.47)	25153	.92	2.00	19953	93 (31.82)	18434	1.08	2.00
1994-95	20937	81.14 (16.25)	25606	.81	2.04	8010	75.80 (8.57)	18802	.42	2.04
1995-96	29972	37.75 (17.06)	26169	1.31	2.05	7006	62.97 (15.94)	19178	.36	2.05
1996-97	24375	20.66 (8.39)	26692	.92	3.11	8854	83.16 (22.47)	19561	.45	3.11
1997-98	22886	16.39 (8.23)	27225	.84	3.14	8450	80.47 (9.16)	19952	.42	3.14
1998-99	20311	18.41 (10.44)	27769	.73	3.77	32586	99.45 (26.69)	20351	1.60	3.71
1999-2000	29743	27.57 (21.18)	28324	1.05	3.62	40047	60.63 (25.00)	20758	1.92	3.82

Note: Parenthesis indicates percentage to total own revenue.

Source: 1) Annual Reports of the gram panchayats, 1990-91 to 1999-2000.

2) Personal Computation.

panchayats. Though the per capita revenue is below the projected per capita demand but collection is better than that Khagrabari gram panchayat. It is almost 43.50 percent respectively in two consecutive years of the proceeds. The administrative machinery compelled the villagers by some measures to pay taxes in addition to collection by paid staff. This helps to enhance tax revenue of the panchayat.

ii) Fees of the Sample Panchayat:

Section 47 of the West Bengal Panchayat (amendment) Act. 1994 provides for the levy of fees, rates and tolls of the gram panchayats⁸. It is an important source of income to every gram panchayat. But the act does not prescribe any uniform rate rather it is will of the respective G.P. Therefore the rate is varied from G.P. to G.P. The position of revenue from fees, rate, tolls in panchayat resources can be seen which is presented in table 5.2

Table-5.2
FEES RECEIVED BY KHAGRABARI AND SIKARPUR GRAM
PANCHAYAT (1990-91 TO 1999-2000)

Year	Khagrabari		Sikarpur	
	Fees (in Rs.)	Percentage of Fees to total Tax Revenue	Fees (in Rs.)	Percentage of fees to total Tax Revenue
90-91	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
91-92	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.	N.A.
92-93	3027	25.63 (23.39)	N.A.	N.A.
93-94	3170	11.97 (8.77)	1484	6.92 (2.36)
94-95	4866	18.85 (3.77)	2556	24.19 (2.73)
95-96	49414	62.27 (28.14)	4115	37.00 (9.36)
96-97	93574	79.33 (32.24)	1790	16.81 (4.59)
97-98	116706	83.60 (41.98)	2100	19.90 (2.27)
98-99	89986	81.58 (46.25)	180	.54 (.15)
99-2000	78124	72.43 (55.62)	26000	39.37 (16.62)

Note: Parentage indicates Percentage to total Revenue.

Source: 1. Annual Reports of Khagrabari & Shikarpur gram panchayat (1990-1991 to 1999-2000)
2. Personal Computation.

Since Khagrabari G.P. is adjacent to the district town a cultural upliftment helps in increasing the revenue from the fees. From the table it

is seen that G.P. begun to earn revenue from the year 92-93. The proceeds of revenue increased from Rs. 3027 to Rs. 78124 in the year 99-2000 showing an increase of 2480 percent (24.81 times) over the years and it went to maximum Rs. 116706 in the year 97-98. Construction of the rural market and growth of rural entrepreneurship were the significant factor contribution to the growth of revenue. The fall in revenue in the year 98-99 was due to the fact that G.P. could not collect the receipt from the market due under tolls to the panchayat during that year. But one interesting point is to be noted here that the percentage of it to total tax revenue as well as total own source revenue tends to increase over the year.

On the other hand, the revenue from the fees, tolls in Sikarpur G.P. is not satisfactory, compared to Khagrabari G.P. But the proceeds in revenue increased from Rs. 1484 in the year 93-94 to Rs. 26000 in the year 99-2000 showing an increase about 16.52 times over the years which is presented in the table 5.2. The percentage if it to total tax revenue increased from 6.92 in the year 92-93 to 39.37 percent in the year 99-2000. Therefore the collection from it was the largest in the year 99-2000 was due to the fact that there was a growth of rural entrepreneurship and receipt from the market which fetched significant amount revenue in that year.

b) Total Tax Revenue of the Sample Panchayat:

In our earlier discussion the different ingredients of tax revenue and their relationship to total tax revenue and total own revenue have been analysed. It will be wise to see the total tax revenue and per capita tax revenue of the sample panchayats. It is seen that over the year's total revenue of all panchayats has been increased considerably. But the

question arises whether the increase in tax revenue has parity with the growth of overall revenue.

Table 5.3 highlights the scenario of Khagrabari G.P. regarding the tax revenue position. It is observed that tax revenue is declined of about 20 percent during the period 1990-91 to 99-2000. The tax revenue in absolute terms increased from Rs. 1892 in 90-91 to Rs. 107867 in 99-2000 showing an increase of 56 times over the years. The fall in tax revenue in the year 99-2000 was due to poor collection of the House tax by the G.P. The per capita tax revenue in 90-91 was Rs. .80 and it is increased to Rs. 3.80 in the year 99-2000. Thus the growth of tax revenue is not slow but moderate. Collection from fees, tolls prove a very potential source of income to this panchayat. The percentage of it increased from 25.63 in 99-2000 as against the 29.57 percentage of house tax collects in the same year.

Table- 5.3
Total Tax Revenue and Per Capita Tax Revenue of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat
(1990-91 to 99-2000)

Year	Tax Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage growth over previous year.	Percentage of Tax Revenue to total revenue.	Population estimates from 1990-91 to 2000	Per Capita Revenue. (in Rs.)
1	2	3	4	5	6
90-91	18992	-	96.80	23703	.80
91-92	15983	-15.84	94.08	24177	.66
92-93	11810	-26.11	91.28	24660	.47
93-94	26471	124.14	73.24	25153	1.05
94-95	25803	-2.52	20.03	25656	1.00
95-96	79351	207.53	45.19	26169	3.03
96-97	117949	48.64	40.64	26692	4.41
97-98	139593	18.35	50.22	27225	5.12
98-99	110298	-20.98	56.69	27769	3.97
99-2000	107867	-2.20	76.80	28324	3.80

Note: Parenthesis indicates percentages Source: 1. Annual reports (1990-91 to 1999-2000)
2. Personal computation.

With regard to Sikarpur gram panchayat house tax constituted the major source of revenue. Among the panchayats studied it has the highest percentage of house tax revenue to total tax revenue as well as total revenue. The tax revenue increased from Rs. 1728 in 90-91 to Rs. 66047 in 99-2000 showing an increase of 37.22 times. While analysing the per capita tax revenue it is clear that Sikarpur gram panchayat has the lowest per capita revenue all the years except in the year 99-2000. The per capita tax revenue in 90-91 was Rs. .09 which is gradually increase to Rs. 3.18 in 99-2000. It is given in the table 5.4. Though a trend of improvement is seen but per capita tax revenue is the lowest among the panchayat studies. With regard to the different item of tax revenue house tax continued to share the major percent of its total income.

Table-5.4
Total Tax Revenue and Per Capita Tax Revenue of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat (1990-91 to 1999-2000)

Year	Tax Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage growth over previous year	Percentage of Tax revenue to total Revenue	Population estimates (1990-1991 to 1999-2000)	Per Capita Revenue (in Rs.)
1	2	3	4	5	6
90-91	1728	-	15.92	17372	0.09
91-92	N.A	-	N.A	17719	-
92-93	729	-	11.32	18073	0.04
93-94	21437	2840.60	34.19	18434	1.16
94-95	10566	-50.71	11.31	18802	0.56
95-96	11121	5.25	25.30	19561	0.57
96-97	10644	-4.28	27.34	19952	0.54
97-98	10550	-.88	11.44	19952	0.52
98-99	32766	210.57	26.84	20351	1.61
99-2000	66047	101.57	42.23	20758	3.18

Source: 1. Annual reports of Shikarpur gram panchayat, (1990-91 to 1999-2000).
2. Personal Computation.

c) Non Tax Revenue of the Sample Panchayats:

Minor local revenue constitutes the source of non-tax revenue. At present it possesses immense revenue potential in the finance of panchayat of West Bengal. However in the majority of the state in India non-tax sources form only small part of total local revenue. Greater autonomy can be promoted by increasing the non-tax revenue raising capabilities of the P.R.I. The following are the most important non-tax revenue sources currently pursued by the G.P. in West Bengal. Cart stands, Receipt from nursery, sale of form, sale of trees, fishing cultivation, fishery rent, saving bank interest, receipt from market, auction, are the sources.

In Khagrabari gram panchayat the major items of revenue are fish cultivation, leasing of pond and selling of trees. The process of revenue increased from Rs. 626 in 90-91 to Rs. 32576 in the year 99-2000 that is presented in table 5.5. The quantum of revenue in the beginning was less but in the latter year it increased and it went up to maximum Rs. 172257 in the year 96-97. The fall of revenue in the year 99-2000 was due to poor collection of receipt from market.

For Sikarpur panchayat the sources of revenue are mostly similar to that of Khagrabari gram panchayats. There was a continuous growth in revenue in absolute terms and percentage in non-tax revenue of total own revenue. It is increased from Rs. 9125 to Rs. 90357 in the year 99-2000 that is presented in table-5.5. In percentage it forms the 57.73 percent of the total own revenue.

Table-5.5
Income Received from minor local revenue by sample
Panchayat (1990-91 to 99-2000)

Year	Khagrabari		Sikarpur	
	Local Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage of Local Revenue to Non-tax Revenue.	Local Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage of Local Revenue to Non-tax Revenue
90-91	626	100 (3.19)	9125	100 (84.07)
91-92	1004	100 (5.19)	N.A.	N.A.
92-93	1127	100 (8.71)	5710	100 (88.67)
93-94	9670	100 (26.75)	41258	100 (65.80)
94-95	103011	100 (79.96)	82885	100 (88.69)
95-96	96228	100 (54.80)	32824	100 (84.31)
96-97	172257	100 (59.35)	28282	100 (72.65)
97-98	138355	100 (49.77)	81711	100 (88.61)
98-99	84246	100 (43.30)	89280	100 (73.15)
99-200	32576	100 (23.19)	90357	100 (57.78)

Note: Parenthesis indicates percentage total revenue.

Source: 1. Annual reports of the Sikarpur to and Khagrabari g.p., (1990-91 to 99-2000)
2. Personal Computation.

d) Total Revenue and Percapita Revenue of Panchayats:-

Analysis of total revenue is essential to understand the growth of revenue of panchayats. An effort is made in this section to discuss the growth and change in the pattern of tax and non-tax revenues and total revenue over the years.

Table 5.6 gives the picture of total revenue position of Khagrabari gram panchayat. The revenue of this panchayat rose from Rs. 19618 in 90-91 to Rs.140443 in 99-2000 showing an increase of 6 times. With regard to

Table- 5.6
Total Revenue and Per Capita Revenue of
Khagrabari Gram Panchayat (1990-91 to 1999-2000)

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Total Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage Growth over Previous Year	Tax Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage Growth over Previous Year	Non Tax Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage Growth over Previous Year	Percentage of Tax Revenue to Total Revenue	Percentage of Non Tax Revenue to Total Revenue	Per Capita total Revenue	
90-91	19618	-	18992	-	626	-	96.80	3.19	0.83	
91-92	16987	-13.41	15983	-15.84	1004	60.38	94.08	5.91	0.70	
92-93	12937	-23.84	11810	-26.11	1127	12.25	91.28	8.71	0.52	
93-94	36142	179.37	26471	124.11	9670	758.03	73.24	26.75	1.44	
94-95	128814	256.41	25803	-2.52	103011	965.26	20.03	79.96	5.02	
95-96	175579	36.30	79351	207.53	96228	-6.58	45.19	54.80	6.70	
96-97	290206	65.29	117949	48.64	172257	79.00	40.64	59.35	10.87	
97-98	277947	4.22	139593	18.35	138355	-19.68	50.22	49.77	10.20	
98-99	194543	-30.00	110298	-20.98	84246	-39.11	56.69	43.30	7.00	
99-2000	140443	-27.80	107867	-2.20	32576	-61.33	76.80	23.20	4.96	

Source: 1. Annual reports of the Khagrabari g.p., (1990-91 to 99-2000)
2. Personal computation.

Table- 5.7
Total Revenue and Per Capita Revenue of
Sikarpur Gram Panchayat (1990-91 to 1999-2000)

Year	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	Total Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage Growth over Previous Year	Tax Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage Growth over Previous Year	Non Tax Revenue (in Rs.)	Percentage Growth over Previous Year	Percentage of Tax Revenue to Total Revenue	Percentage of Non Tax Revenue to Total Revenue	Per Capita total Revenue (in Rs.)	
90-91	10853	-	1728	-	9125	-	15.92	84.07	0.62	
91-92	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A	
92-93	6439	-	729	-	5710	-	11.32	88.67	0.35	
93-94	62695	873.67	21437	2840.60	41258	622.56	34.19	65.80	3.40	
94-95	93451	49.05	10566	-50.71	82885	100.89	11.31	88.69	4.97	
95-96	43945	-52.97	11121	5.25	32824	-60.39	25.30	84.31	2.29	
96-97	38928	-11.42	10644	-4.28	28282	-13.84	27.34	72.65	1.99	
97-98	92211	136.88	10550	-88	81711	188.92	11.44	88.61	4.62	
98-99	122046	32.36	32766	210.57	89280	9.26	26.84	73.15	5.99	
99-2000	156404	28.15	66047	101.57	90357	1.21	42.22	57.78	7.53	

Source: 1. Annual reports of the Sikarpur g.p., (1990-91 to 99-2000)
2. Personal computation.

tax revenue of the panchayat, the increase during the years only 4 times. The growth in tax revenue has no parity with the overall growth in tax revenue. However, the percentage of tax revenue to total revenue declined from 96.80 to 76.80 in 99-2000. Fees and rates are the major components of tax revenue as discussed in the earlier section. Since the location of this panchayat is town adjacent, development of other activities took place from the year 94-95 and potentiality of non-tax revenue grew rapidly. In absolute terms the non-tax revenue increased by 5103 percent (51 times) from 90-91 to 99-2000. The sharp fall of revenue in the year 99-2000 was due to poor collection. The percentage of it to total own revenue increased from 3.19 in 90-91 to 23.20 percent in 99-2000 and went up to maximum 69.96 percent in the year 94-95. Thus in the later years non-tax revenue played significant part in the finance of Khagrabari G.P. With regard to per capita revenue, the increase in actual terms was from .83 in 90 -91 to Rs. 4.96 in 99-2000.

The total revenue of Sikarpur panchayat rose to 1341 (13 times) percent during the period 1990-91 to 99-2000. In absolute terms it increased from Rs. 10853 to Rs. 156404 in 99-2000 showing 37 times over the year as shown in the table 5.7. The growth in revenue is keeping satisfactory pace with the overall growth of revenue. The percentage of tax revenue to total revenue is increased from 15.92 in 90-91 to 42.22 percentages in 99-2000. The percentage of non-tax revenue is decreased from 84.07 in 90-91 to 57.78 in 99-2000 but in absolute terms the revenue rose from Rs. 9125 in 90-91 to Rs.90357 in 99-2000 showing an increase of 890 percent. The per capita revenue is increased from Rs. .62 in 90-91 to 7.53 in 99-2000. The revenue increases in absolute terms in Sikarpur and is followed by

Khagrabari Among the panchayats the major influencing factor of revenue is non-tax revenue.

e) Grants from the Govt. and Own Resource of the Sample Panchayats:-

The Union Parliament facilitated their creation by bring up about the constitution (73rd amendment 1992). It is the duty of centre and states to provide financial support to panchayat. Section 45 of the West Bengal panchayat act lays down that gram panchayat fund consists of contribution from the state govt and central govt⁹. operationally there are two types of grants-purposive grant which include implementation of assigned scheme given by central govt and source of this grant is central govt. J.R.Y., I.A.Y. the central sponsored schemes fall under this category. In addition panchayats also avails of some schemes related to rural development and social security. On the other hand grants from the state government are of wide variety such as general grants, specific grant establishment grant (Salaries and allowance, office expanses, fees of the members) incentive grant. Specific grants are given for construction and maintenance of road, school buildings, culvert maintenance of minor irrigation scheme and also for public health and social welfare measures. Grants notably J.R.Y., I.A.Y. dominate the source of panchayat finance. Under such a granter grantee relationship, very little autonomous development and self-rule can happen¹⁰. Therefore, the predominance of government grants and low contribution from resource of the two gram panchayat are illustrated in Table 5.8, 5.9 respectively.

With regard to the **Khagrabari** gram panchayat, the own source of income is on an average 6.25 percent and grants include 94.25 percent. Among them I.R.Y., I.A.Y. centrally sponsored scheme constitutes the

Table- 5.8
Own Resource and Grant of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat over the Years (90-91 to 99-2000)

Year	Purposive Grant (Rs.)	Establishment & Other Grant (Rs.)	Total Grant (Rs.)	Own Resource (Rs.)	Total Resources (Rs.)
90-91	390738 (67.86)	165404 (28.73)	556142 (96.59)	19618 (3.45)	575760
91-92	474020 (66.68)	220014 (30.31)	694034 (97.61)	16987 (2.39)	711021
92-93	819293 (84.78)	134096 (13.88)	953389 (98.66)	12937 (1.34)	966326
93-94	669392 (75.53)	180703 (20.39)	850095 (95.92)	36142 (4.08)	886237
94-95	1052734 (76.25)	198999 (14.41)	1251733 (90.66)	128814 (9.33)	1380547
95-96	858829 (50.91)	652610 (38.68)	1511439 (89.59)	175579 (10.41)	1687018
96-97	574955 (29.56)	079784 (55.51)	1654739 (85.08)	290206 (14.92)	1944945
97-98	2070429 (69.71)	621613 (20.93)	2692042 (90.64)	277947 (9.36)	2969989
98-99	1324434 (35.81)	2179132 (58.93)	3503566 (94.74)	194543 (5.26)	3698109
99-2000	4495911 (65.12)	2259248 (32.76)	6755159 (97.95)	140443 (2.04)	6895602

Note – i) Parenthesis indicate percentages on total resource
ii) Purposive Grant sponsored by Central govt.
iii) Establishment grants by state govt.

Source: i) Annual reports of Khagrabari gram panchayat from 1990-91 to 1999-2000
ii) Personal Computation

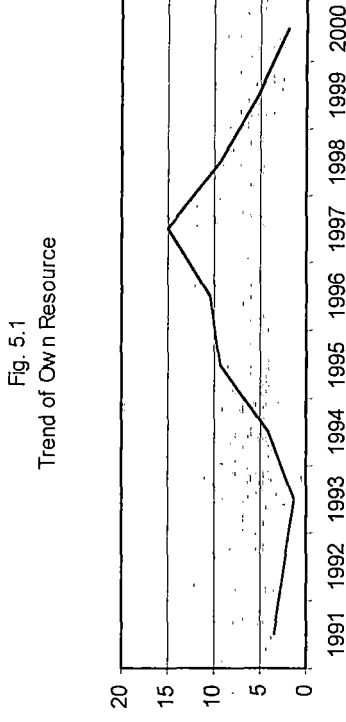


Fig. 5.2
Distribution of Grant & Own Resource



Table-5.9
Own Resource and Grant of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat over the Years (90-91 to 99-2000)

Year	Purposive Grant (Rs.)	Establishment & Other Grant (Rs.)	Total Grant (Rs.)	Own Resource (Rs.)	Total Resource (Rs.)
90-91	399467 (74.34)	137914	537381 (98.02)	10853 (1.98)	548234
91-92	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
92-93	43430 (43.84)	55634	99064 (93.90)	6439 (6.10)	105503
93-94	1048053 (92.95)	79433	1127486 (94.73)	62695 (5.27)	1190181
94-95	931916 (85.20)	161943	1093859 (92.13)	93451 (7.87)	1187310
95-96	1600 000 (90.80)	162016	1762016 (97.57)	43945 (2.43)	1805961
96-97	1200 000 (84.51)	219915	1419915 (97.33)	38928 (2.67)	1458843
97-98	2015910 (77.58)	582286	2598196 (96.57)	92211 (3.43)	2690407
98-99	2117618 (82.20)	458693	2576311 (95.48)	122046 (4.52)	2698357
99-2000	5184220 (91.43)	486198	5670418 (97.32)	156404 (2.68)	5826822

Note – i) Parenthesis indicate percentages on total resource
ii) Purposive Grant sponsored by Central govt.
iii) Establishment grants by state govt.

Source: i) Annual reports of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat from 1990 – 91 to 1999 – 2000
ii) Personal Computation

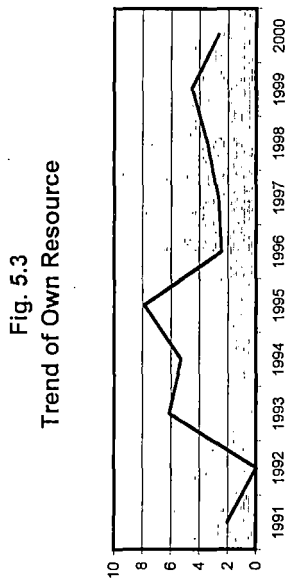
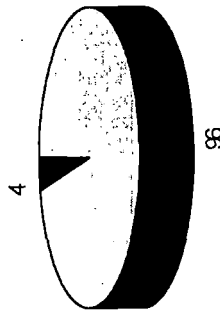


Fig. 5.4
Distribution of Grant & Own Resource



lion share as high as 85.93 percent in year 92-93. But it is interesting to note that from the year 93-94 a raising trend is being noticed in generation of own resource and it reached to a maximum 14.92 percent in the year 96-97. The credit goes to the panchayat due to own consciousness about the self-reliance. They set up social forestry, constructed regulated market, and created pond for fish cultivation. In the last year the percentage of owns source goes down to 2.04 percent because of the poor collection of the receipt from the market. However a positive attitude by the gram panchayat towards the way of self-reliance is being developed.

An analysis of Table 5.9 gives the picture of generation of own resource to total resource by the **Sikarpur** gram panchayat. The own resource is on an average 3.69 percent, which is low compared to Khagrabari gram panchayat. Grants constitute 96.40 percent. J.R.Y. grant continues to share the major percent of the total resource, which is as high as 92.95 percent in the year 93-94. But one thing is to be remembered that generation of own resources tends to increase from the year 92-93 and it went up to 7.87 percent in the year 94-95. The own resource increased from Rs. 10852.00 in 90-91 to Rs.156404 showing an increase of. The reason behind is awareness among the panchayat to stand on their own foot. They set up village market, social forestry and encouraged set-up rural entrepreneurship.

f) Expenditure of Panchayats: -

“Fiscal federalism literature argues that expenditure assignment must precede tax assignment. This is because tax assignment would in general be guided by expenditure requirement at different levels and these cannot be worked out in advance of expenditure assignment”¹¹. We have observed the revenue effort of the G.P. in the earlier section. Here we will see how income from revenue is applied for development activities. The

West Bengal panchayat act states the functions to be performed by the G.P., which is described in chapter 2. The development activities include education, health, fisheries, water supply, streetlights development project. The Govt. meets the salaries of administrative staff, collection staff of every panchayats. The administrative staff consists of Secretary, Job assistant, Tax collector. There are no guidelines for panchayat on the utilisation of their limited funds under village work. The expenditure policies are decided in accordance with the availability of funds.

Table 5.10 depicts the analysis of expenditure pattern of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. It appears from the table that expenditure on streetlight has received the major attention over the years. It is one of the amenities provided by the panchayats. The electricity board charges panchayats at a flat rate for each street light irrespective of the actual consumption of power. It also provides and erects all the fittings and fixture and replaces bulbs free of coast. The expenditure is increased from Rs.10824 in the year 90-91 to Rs. 57668 in the year 99-2000 i.e., 432.77 percent (4.32 times) and went up maximum to Rs. 58335 in the year 98-99. On an average it is 34.20 percent of the own resources. The increase in expenditure is due to the increase in the rates and increase in lights in the panchayat area. The expenditure in fishing is increased from Rs. 400 in 90-91 to Rs. 30152 in the year 99-2000 showing an increase of 7438 percent (74.38 times). The increase is in percentage from 2.04 percent of the total resources in the year 90-91 to 21.47 percent in the year 99-2000. The cost involves purchasing prawn, renovation and maintenance of the pounds. It is interesting to see that education and health, which are the most important area of social development¹², have received the least attention. The expenditure incurred over the decade is negligible. The percentage of expenditure of total own resources is decreased from 18.73 percent in the year 90-91 to 2.57 percent in the year 99-2000 on an

average 5.96 percent of the total own resources is being spent on education. The picture is worse in the matter of health. The panchayat started making expenditure of 12.23 percent of the total own resources in the year 99-2000 only. The amount is very small in rest of other years. The expenditure associated with purchasing of medicine, which are distributed to the people free of cost and remuneration to doctors. There has been a considerable growth of expenditure in the matter of drinking water. The expenditure in absolute terms is increased Rs. 2900 in the year 91-92 to Rs. 76976 in the year 99-2000 showing an increase of 25.54 times during the year and the percentage from resources which stood 17.07 percent in the year 91-92 is increased to 39.57 percent in the year 98-99. The program consists of repairing of wells, setting up of wells in scarcity area and piped water supply. More than 50% of the expenditure is made in the last three years in development project which consists of silk cultivation. It offers some employment to the people of the gram panchayat.

As regards Sikarpur gram panchayat the expenditure on development activities is increased both in absolute terms and in percentage to total expenditure. Table 5.11 gives that in terms of actual expenditure and in percentage of total own resources. Sikarpur had earmarked a considerable portion of its outlay on miscellaneous items. In some of the years the expenditure on this head went up to more than 50%. It includes items, which are not development oriented. Entertainment to G.P. members, telephone bill, electricity bill, donation remuneration to daily labour are the items of expenditure under this head. In absolute terms the expenditure increased

Table- 5.10
Development Expenditure of Khagrabari G.P from 90-91 to 99-2000

Year	Total Own Resource Rs.	Street Light Rs.	Fishing Rs.	Education Rs.	Health Rs.	Drinking Water Rs.	Development Project Rs.	Total Development Expenditure Rs.	Misc. Exp. Rs.
90-91	19618	10824 (55.17)	400 (2.04)	3675 (18.73)	Nil	Nil	Nil.	14899 (75.94)	4719 (24.06)
91-92	16987	8702 (51.23)	-	1280 (7.54)	Nil	2900 (17.07)	Nil	12882 (75.84)	4105 (24.16)
92-93	12937	7418 (57.34)	-	1834 (14.18)	Nil	4075 (31.50)	Nil	13327 (103.02)	Nil
93-94	36142	20721 (57.33)	1173 (3.25)	1416 (3.92)	Nil	2397 (6.63)	Nil	25707 (71.13)	10435 (28.87)
94-95	128814	21222 (16.47)	27707 (21.51)	2100 (1.63)	Nil	20352 (15.80)	22716 (17.64)	94097 (73.05)	34717 (26.95)
95-96	175579	19265 (10.97)	12283 (6.99)	4466 (2.54)	Nil	15843 (9.02)	87960 (50.09)	139817 (79.61)	35762 (20.37)
96-97	290206	32190 (11.09)	29540 (10.18)	5559 (1.92)	481 (0.17)	47000 (16.19)	162544 (56.00)	277314 (95.56)	12892 (4.44)
97-98	277947	31682 (11.40)	26354 (94.48)	6890 (2.48)	1500 (0.54)	Nil	157836 (56.79)	224262 (80.69)	53685 (19.31)
98-99	194543	58335 (29.99)	32815 (16.87)	8117 (4.17)	18300 (9.41)	76976 (39.57)	Nil	194543 (100.00)	Nil
99-2000	140443	57668 (41.06)	30152 (21.47)	3614 (2.57)	17180 (12.23)	Nil	Nil	108614 (77.34)	31829 (22.66)

Note : Parenthesis indicates percentages.

Source :

1. Annual Reports of Khagrabari G.P. (1990-91 to 1999-2000)
2. Personal Computation.

Table- 5.11
Development Expenditure of Sikarpur G.P from 90-91 to 99-2000

Year	Total Own Resource Rs.	Street Light Rs.	Fishing Rs.	Education Rs.	Health Rs.	Drinking Water Rs.	Development Project Rs.	Total Development Expenditure Rs.	Misc. Exp. Rs.
90-91	10853	-	-	4622 (42.59)	-	-	-	4622 (42.59)	6231 (57.40)
91-92	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
92-93	6439	-	-	-	-	157 (2.44)	-	157 (2.44)	6282 (97.56)
93-94	62695	-	-	1690 (2.70)	-	7700 (12.28)	26228 (41.83)	35618 (56.81)	27077 (43.19)
94-95	93451	-	-	1500 (1.61)	-	1419 (1.52)	7961 (8.52)	10880 (11.65)	34157 (36.55)
95-96	43945	-	-	4176 (9.50)	2115 (4.81)	1091 (2.48)	12076 (27.48)	19458 (44.27)	24487 (55.73)
96-97	38928	-	2528 (6.49)	4063 (10.44)	4200 (10.79)	189 (0.49)	4655 (11.96)	15635 (40.17)	23293 (59.83)
97-98	92211	-	-	3300 (3.58)	3445 (3.74)	-	3470 (3.76)	10215 (11.08)	32583 (35.34)
98-99	122046	-	7500 (6.15)	89665 (73.47)	6962 (5.70)	787 (0.64)	-	104914 (85.96)	17132 (14.04)
99-2000	156404	-	2829 (1.81)	25000 (15.98)	-	25852 (16.53)	46710 (29.86)	100391 (64.19)	56013 (35.81)

Note : Parenthesis indicates percentages.

Source : 1. Annual Reports of Sikarpur G.P. (1990-91 to 1999-2000)
2. Personal Computation.

from Rs. 6231 in the year 90-91 to Rs. 56013 in the year 99-2000 showing an increase of 7.98 times over the years. Regarding street light it is a pity that electrification is yet to be done in the villages under this G.P. But efforts are going on in this field. In the matter of education and health no distinction can be drawn in regard to expenditure with Khagrabari G.P. In the year 98-99 73.47 percent of the own resources was expended on education but a very small amount was spent in other years. There was an involvement of heavy expenditure for the construction of building of primary school in the year 98-99. The position is same in the matter of health. On an average 6.25 percent of the own resources have been allocated on health over the years. The cost is associated with immunization of pulse polio only of the rural children under 5 years. In the year 99-2000 drinking water received a sizable amount to Rs. 25,852 i.e., 16.53 percent of the own resources and very negligible amount is spent in other years. The cost involves setting up of wells and repairing of wells. A significant amount is spent on development project in the year 93-94, and 99-2000 respectively which consists of setting up of rural hat, making of wooden bridge, giving agricultural training and making competition of wawaia sangeet.

f) Summary

Analysis of this chapter looks on internal resources. i.e. revenue, grants expenditure patterns of panchayat and draws some notable points. Among the internal resources, house tax is an important source of revenue. Over the years from 1990-91 to 99-2000 the house tax revenue of all panchayats increased considerably but the panchayats failed to mobilise the revenue from house tax satisfactorily (Table 5.1). Fees as a source of finance has played a significant part in the resource of panchayats. Contribution during the last four years was more than 70 percent of the total tax revenue in Khagrabari G.P. (Table- 5.2). The total

tax revenue of Khagrabari panchayat increased by 468 percent whereas Sikarpur by 3722 percent during the period from 1990-91 to 99-2000. (Table 5.3, 5.4).

Non tax revenue is the most influencing factor in the generation of revenue in Sikarpur G.P. Non tax revenue as a percentage to total revenue is more than 70 percent in all the years in the year in case of Sikarpur G.P. (Table 5.5).

The total revenue of all panchayats increased considerably during the period from 90-91 to 99-2000. The percentage increase was 616, 1341 in the case of Khagrabari, Sikarpur panchayat respectively during the same period. The per capita revenue of Khagrabari panchayat was increased from Rs. .83 in 90-91 to Rs. 4.96 in the year 99-2000. Sikarpur has the highest per capita revenue of Rs. 7.53 in 99-2000, which increased from Rs. .62 in the year 90-91 (Table 5.6, 5.7).

An overall picture of grants-in-aid reveals that still panchayats are solely dependent on it. It is infact a life to them. On an average 96 percent of the total finance includes grants in Sikarpur G.P., 4 percent of the total resources have been created by themselves (Table 5.9). Similarly total finance of the Khagrabari G.P. constitutes 94 percent from the grant and 6 percent from own resource (Table 5.8).

A look at the total expenditure of Panchayats brings out the fact that the expenditure in absolute terms during the period from 1990-91 to 99-2000 on development activities increased considerably. But the Panchayats did not adopt the balanced approach in expenditure policy, hence a greater fluctuation is observed in certain years on different items. The social sector i.e. health, education, which should have been given priority, is neglected in all the Panchayats. On an average 5.96 percent of the total own resources is spent on education in Khagrabari G.P. (Table 5.10). In all the years except in the year of 90-91 and 99-2000 7.30 percent

is spent on education in Sikarpur G.P. (Table 5.11): Expenditure under drinking water increased from 17.07 percent in the year 1991-92 to 39.57 percent in the year 98-99 in Khagrabari G.P. Health expenditure received fewer slices of the total own resources. It is decreased from 18.73 percent in the year 90-91 to 2.57 percent in the year 99-2000 in Khagrabari G.P. (Table 5.10). The position of Sikarpur G.P. under this head showed no better picture. Emphasis on expenditure of miscellaneous item was given in Sikarpur G.P. in place of expenditure on developmental activities. In some of the years the expenditure under this head went up to more than 50 percent (Table 5.11).

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Chapter VI

Role of Panchayats and Poverty Alleviation Programmes on the Rural Economy of Cooch Behar

Introduction:

Alleviation of rural poverty has been the major objective in India specifically from 6th five year plan. For this purpose, the Govt. of India launched two important comprehensive rural development programmes viz IRDP & JRY during 6th & 7th plan period throughout the country to reduce the high incidence of poverty. IRDP (1979) seeks to provide productive assets to the 'Poorest of the Poor' through a credit-cum-subsidy package so that they can employ themselves usefully to earn greater incomes and thus cross the poverty line. The main objective of JRY (1989) is to generate additional gainful employment for the unemployed and underemployed persons in rural areas by creating community productive assets and to improve the overall quality of life in rural areas. This programme is specifically targeted to help people below the 'Poverty line'. After restructuring a little and keeping the objectives more or less same from April 1999, both the programme have been replaced into new names – Swarn Jayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana (SGSY) instead of IRDP and Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JSGY) instead of JRY⁽¹⁾. Thus performance appraisal of both the programmes (IRDP & JRY) have been made in our study area before they came into operational existence with new names.

Under decentralised planning, Panchayat Raj Institutions namely gram panchayats are entrusted with the great task for planning, implementation and monitoring of all such rural development programmes in the villages involving rural people in decision making process. They are the key agents of fulfilling the felt needs & aspirations of the rural people and development of the villages.

To study the role of panchayats and poverty alleviation programmes on the rural economy of Cooch Behar, the chapter has been divided into two sections viz Section-I & Section-II. In Section-I we have studied the overall performance of IRDP in two sample panchayats of the district. Similarly, in Section-II, the overall performance of JRY has been studied in those sample GPs. To evaluate the impact of both the programmes on the target group of people and to arrive at positive conclusion a field survey also has been carried out in the selected GPs.

Section-A

a) Basic Approach of IRDP to the Target Group of People of the Priority Sector through DRDA.

Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) was introduced by the Government of India in the year 1979, to alleviate mass poverty in rural India. It is a major rural development programme. Before its introduction, various programme and approaches have been adopted upto fifth five-year plans for rural development. By and large, all the programmes and their approaches - were selective, sporadic, piecemeal or sectoral in nature. They just covered one or two aspects of rural people in the selected areas. They provided only marginal impact on the rural life and could lead to the balanced and overall development of rural areas. They have caused spatial and sectoral imbalances in the growth of the economy.²

With a view to remove these drawbacks, the IRDP was introduced. The concept of IRDP in its full-fledged form is more comprehensive. As stated by Mishra & Sundaram³, it is a multi-level, multi-sector and multi-section concept of rural development. As a multi-level concept, it extends rural development to the viable cluster of village communities, blocks & district. As a multi-sector concept, it embraces development in various sectors and sub-sectors of rural economy like agriculture, industry, education, health and transportation

etc. As a multi-sector concept, it likes to bring socio-economic development of various poorer sections or sub-sectors of rural population such as landless labourers, artisans, small farmers, marginal farmers, scheduled caste and tribes. It aims at integrating the low income segments with the rest of the rural community by ensuring them a better participation in production process and a more equitable share in the benefits of development.⁴

The target of IRDP was to assist, on an average, 600 poor families per block per year and 3000 families per block during the 6th plan period. In this manner, 3 million families would be assisted in a year and 15 million families in the course of sixth plan in the country as a whole. For each block a uniform allocation of RS. 35 lakhs was to be shared between the centre and the states on a 50:50 basis.⁵

Under IRDP, identified rural families (lying below the poverty line), are assisted through viable bankable projects. In order to enhance the viability of a project, different rates of subsidy are admissible on the total cost of a project. The capital cost of a project/asset is subsidies to the extent of 25% for small farmers, 33.3 per cent for marginal farmers, agricultural and non-agricultural labourers and 50 percent for scheduled caste and tribe beneficiaries.⁶ Following the Antyodaya principle, the programmes is intended to reach the poorest household first and later to reach other poor people in an ascending order.⁷

Progress of IRDP during the sixth plan reveals that a total investment of RS. 4762 crores was made to help 16.56 million beneficiaries. During seventh plan a total investment of RS. 8688 crores was made to cover 18.2 million beneficiaries. In the eighth plan (1992-93 to 1996-97) a total investment of RS. 11541 crores was made to assist 108.2 lakhs families.⁸

The Department of Rural Development (Ministry of Agricultural) is the apex level agency responsible for overall guidance, policy making and monitoring of the programme. At the state level, the State Level

Coordination Committee (SLCC) monitors the programme. At the District level, there is District Rural Development Agency (DRDA). At the Block level, the Chief Coordinator is the Block Development Officer (BDO). He is assisted by Extension Officers. Below the BDO is the Village Level Worker (VLO) at the village level. Apart from official agencies, voluntary agencies and prominent voluntary action groups concerned with socio-economic activity pertaining to rural development could also be associated with the programmes.⁹

The DRDA Cooch Behar came into existence on 26.5.81 with the amalgamation of the Small Farmers' Development Agency (SFDA).¹⁰ DRDA actually started functioning from 1982-83. This agency is identifying the beneficiaries, drawing different viable and bankable projects on local resources, providing subsidy and other necessary inputs and assistance in marketing of products and providing adequate training with the help of gram panchayat, Panchayat Samities, lead bank and other development agencies. This agency identifies the beneficiaries on the recommendation of the gram panchayat and Panchayat Samities. Different commercial and public sector banks are providing bank loan on the subsidised projects sponsored by DRDA. The area operation of this agency has covered 12 blocks of the district including 128 gram panchayats. Among many schemes, the district of Cooch Behar justifies agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, sericulture, and small industry under IRDP from the viewpoint of economic viability. The identified families below the poverty line are provided with Govt. subsidy and bank loan on those schemes from preventing the families from slipping back into poverty.¹¹

b) Progress on Implementation of IRDP in the Sample Panchayat Khagrabari through DRDA.

Integrated Rural Development Programme has been implemented in all blocks of the district Cooch Behar covering all gram Panchayats since 1982. Project officers of DRDA, lead Bank officer,

BDO and gram panchayats are the key agents of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Programme in the district. In both the Panchayats we have studied the Progress on implementation of IRDP for last five years. The Progress made in the matter of implementation of IRDP through DRDA in the sample Panchayat Khagrabari for the year 1993-94 to 1998-99 is shown in the table- 6.1.

Table No. 6.1
Amount Showing Total Project Cost, Subsidy Released and the Number of Beneficiary Covered through D.R.D.A in Khagrabari G.P.

Year	Total Project Cost(Rs.)	Amount of Subsidiary Released (Rs.)	No. of Beneficiary	No. of SC
1993-94	199040	82020	42	23
1994-95	381350	148111	68	32
1995-96	343800	138151	74	21
1996-97	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A
1997-98	150500	65899	35	22
1998-99	155355	57146	26	7
Total	1230045	491327	245	105

Source: i) DRDA Annual Action Plan from 93-94 to 98-99
 ii) Personal Computation.

It appears from the table that there was a sharp increase in the quantum of subsidy released and number of beneficiaries covered under the Programme. This is because of high non-recovery of bank loans on IRDP projects and the financing banks felt discouraged to sanction fresh loans to the new beneficiaries. Moreover considerable delay was marked in preparing necessary documents of the beneficiaries by concerned authorities. Total amount of subsidy released amounted to Rs. 491327 and the total number of beneficiaries covered were 245 of which 105 were scheduled caste (42.85 percent) during the years under review.

In Khagrabari G.P. different IRDP schemes are operative. From the viewpoint of economic viability and option of the beneficiaries, the popular schemes are – Chira Muri, Vegetable Vending, Bamboo Craft, Goatery, Rickshaw Van, Furniture Shop, Milch Cow. Table 6.2 shows the amount of subsidy released, Bank loan and the number of beneficiaries covered under different schemes in Khagrabari G.P.

Table No. – 6.2

Table Showing Amount of Subsidy, Bank loan and No. of Beneficiary Under Various Scheme in Khagrabari G.P

Year	93-94			94-95			95-96			96-97			98-99		
	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of. Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of. Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of. Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of. Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of. Benf.
Rice & Rice Product	5500	7700	2	18000	27000	5	3000	6000	1						
Jute Rope	1200	2400	1	2400	2400	1	2400	2400	1				2116	4234	1
Tailoring	2400	4800	1	3400	6800	1	3400	6800	1				3400	6800	1
Photo Binding	1900	3800	1	-	-	-	-	-	-				-	-	-
Goatary	2600	2600	2	14665	21335	9	23996	40004	16						
Mitch Cow	14820	19380	5	10000	18000	2	-	-	-						
Rikshaw Van	4200	4200	1	1500	1500	1	6000	12000	6				2000	2000	8
Vegetable Vendor	8500	9500	6	12835	18665	9	14003	24497	11				3999	8001	3
Dhenkhi	11550	14850	8	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Grocery	4000	6000	1	4000	9300	1	-	-	-				8000	1860	2
Chira Muri	6200	8800	6	31136	42364	21	9335	15165	7					0	
Well Ring	4800	4800	1	4000	4800	1	-	-	-						

Continued

Table No. – 6.2

Table Showing Amount of Subsidy, Bank loan and No. of Beneficiary Under Various Scheme in Khagrabari G.P

Year	93-94			94-95			95-96			96-97			98-99		
	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf.
Papad Making	5700	11400	3	2933	5867	1	2933	5867	1						
Readymade Garment	2100	4200	1	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Bidi Making	2550	5100	2	7175	11275	3	-	-	-						
Jersey Cow	4000	7490	1	-	-	-	-	-	-						
Fish Vending				2250	2250	1	-	-	-						
Handloom				6000	14100	1	-	-	-						
Pan Biri Shop				3750	5250	2	9750	17250	6						
Rickshaw Repairing				3267	6533	1	-	-	-						
Bamboo Craft				11000	13000	4	51000	51000	17	16800	16800	12			
Jute Making				7800	15600	3	-	-	-						
Saloon				2000	4000	1	2000	4000	1						
Paper Packet							2000	4000	2						

Continued

Table No. – 6.2

Table Showing Amount of Subsidy, Bank loan and No. of Beneficiary Under Various Scheme in Khagrabari G.P

Year	93-94			94-95			95-96			96-97			98-99		
	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf.	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf.
Poultry				4000	8000	1									
Thota				1534	3066	2									
Dhupkati Mtg.				2800	5600	1									
Piggery							24500	24500	7						
Carpentry							15600	27300	11				9100	14300	6
Banana Cult							3000	6000	1				2166	4334	1
Laundry													4000	8700	1
Furniture													2200	4400	1
Tea Stall													7500	7500	1
5 H.P. Pump Set	82020	117020	42	148111	233239	68	138151	205649	74	65899	84601	35	57146	98209	26

N.B. Data is not available for the year 97-98

Surce- Annual Action Plan, DRDA, Cooch Behar 1993-94 to 1998-99

c) Progress on Implementation of IRDP in the Sample Panchayat Sikarpur through D.R.D.A.

Sikarpur gram panchayat (in Mathabhanga Block-II) relatively less developed and dominated by agriculture. Here we find a large proportion of scheduled caste population lying below the poverty line. Since inception of the programme the BDO and the Panchayat members have been extending their active co-operation and help to the beneficiaries for obtaining loan & subsidy on different schemes. The elected representatives are very close to the beneficiaries even in preparing the necessary documents for getting loan & subsidy. The progress made in the matter of implementation of IRDP through DRDA in the sample Panchayat Sikarpur for the years 1993-94 to 1998-99 is shown in table- 6.3

Table No. – 6.3

Amount Showing Total Project Cost, Subsidy Released and the Number of Beneficiary Covered through D.R.D.A in Sikarpur G.P.

Year	Total Project Cost (Rs.)	Amount of Subsidy released (Rs.)	No. of beneficiary	No. of SC
1993-94	452187	206264	91	67
1994-95	550400	236167	80	58
1995-96	572100	202782	60	42
1996-97	180050	80732	37	30
1997-98	N.A	N.A	N.A	N.A
1998-99	189540	85732	37	32
Total	1944277	812677	305	229

Source : i) Annual Action Plan, DRDA, Cooch Behar 93-94 to 98-99
ii) Personal Compilation

From the above table 6.3 it appears that quantum of subsidy released and number of beneficiaries covered under the Programme both were satisfactory upto 1995-96. But in the years 1996-97 and

1998-97 subsidy released and number of beneficiaries covered under the programme were not at all encouraging. This is mainly because of non-repayment of bank loan on the one hand and lack of initiative in preparing necessary papers & documents of the beneficiaries by the concerned authorities. Considering the year under review, total amount of subsidy released was Rs. 8,12,677 and the total number of beneficiaries covered were 305 of which 229 were scheduled caste beneficiaries (75 percent).

From the view point of economic viability and option of the beneficiaries, the popular schemes in the G.P. are:- Milch Cow, Rickshaw Van, Chira Muri, Goatery, Vegetable vending, Bamboo Craft. Amount of subsidy released, Bank loan and the number of beneficiaries covered under different schemes is shown in table 6.4

Table No. 6.4

Table showing amount of subsidy, Bank loan and No. of beneficiary under scheme wise in Sikarpur G.P

Name of the scheme	93-94			94-95			95-96			96-97			98-99		
	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf
Milch Cow	74100	90060	24	22000	34000	4	10600	23600	18	-	-	-	-	-	-
Rice & Rice Product	40700	51700	14	76500	85500	18	3000	6000	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Dheki	52250	63250	35	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chira Muri	4050	4050	3	30251	38749	21	22750	24750	14	-	-	-	-	-	-
Goatary	8234	9933	7	22000	27000	13	78320	16168	6	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tea Stall	9600	9600	3	-	-	-	7500	11700	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Net & Boat	3500	3500	1	5000	5000	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Bullok cart	3600	3600	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Saloon	2680	2680	1	27000	36000	7	4500	4500	1	5100	5100	1	5100	5100	1
Bamboo Craft	2550	2550	1	-	-	-	36700	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Grocery	-	-	-	9000	15000	4	-	41300	13	2800	2800	2	2800	2800	2

Continued

Table showing amount of subsidy, Bank loan and No. of beneficiary under scheme wise in Sikarpur G.P

Name of the scheme	93-94			94-95			95-96			96-97			98-99		
	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf	Subsidy	Bank Loan	No. of Benf
Rickshaw Van	5000	5000	1	16000	23900	3	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sweet Shop	-	-	-	3000	3000	2	-	-	-	36666	39334	19	37999	44001	20
Veg. Vendor	-	-	-	4000	10000	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Pati Making	-	-	-	1750	1750	1	-	-	-	20666	23334	11	19339	20667	10
Furniture Making	-	-	-	15666	24334	4	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
R/R Business	-	-	-	4000	10000	1	10500	16500	3	-	-	-	-	-	-
Radio	-	-	-	-	-	-	4000	12400	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tape Repair	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4000	15250	1	8000	15240	1
Poultry	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3000	3000	1	3500	7000	1
Piggery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9000	9000	2	9000	9000	2
Banana Calt	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	206264	245923	91	236167	314233	80	202782	369318	60	81732	98318	37	85732	103808	37

N.B. Data is not available for the years 97-98

Source: DRDA, Cooch Behar Annual Action Plans from 1993-94 to 98-99.

d) Survey Result to Evaluate the Impact of IRDP on the Target Group of People (Priority Sectors) ¹²

To evaluate the impact of IRDP on the target group of people, we have conducted a sample survey in two selected gram panchayats viz Khagrabari & Sikarpur. Four villages (two from each G.P) and 100 beneficiaries (25 from each village) have been selected randomly for the purpose. The names of the villages were – Mahisbathan, Banchukamari, Nalangibari & Mohanpur. Relevant information primary data have been collected from the beneficiary families through questionnaire's and personal interview. The questionnaire's prepared for survey has been given in appendix. The occupational status of the beneficiaries were small farmers–5; marginal farmers–17, agricultural labourers–16, other agricultural labourers–18 and small businessmen–44 out of the sample families of 100, 4 belonged to yearly income group of Rs. 0–2265; 21 belonged to Rs. 2265–3500; 52 belonged to Rs. 3501–4800, 11 belonged to 4801– 6400 and 12 families belonged to 9000+.

From information collected, the other important results are shown as follows: -

- i) Number of Families Who Crossed the Poverty Line:** The number of families who crossed the poverty line with the help of IRDP was 60 (60%) but on the close scrutiny, it was found that 12 families had been wrongly identified and they had been above the poverty line according to their pre-investment annual income criteria of Rs. 9000+. These families generated sufficient income with the help of IRDP. This wrong identification of beneficiaries undoubtedly shows that a large considerable amount of resources has been diverted to the families above the poverty line at the expense of the poorest of the poor families. Next 48 families who crossed the poverty line with the help of IRDP belonged to the

respective annual income group of Rs. 2265–3500; Rs. 3501–4800 and Rs. 4801–6400. 12 families belonged to the annual income group of Rs. 2265–3500; 28 belonged to Rs. 3501–4800 and 8 belonged to Rs. 4801–6400. Highest number of families crossed the poverty line belonged to the annual income group of Rs. 3501–4800 (28%). No family crossed the poverty line from annual income group of Rs. 0–2265. Schemes which helped most of the families to cross the poverty line were tertiary (42%), Primary (18%). Percentage of general caste families who crossed the poverty line was 32 percent and the percentage of Scheduled Caste families was (28%).

ii) Status of the Asset: Regarding status of the asset among a total of 100 beneficiaries, the survey result shows that 60 beneficiaries (60%) utilised their assets and generated income. 12 beneficiaries (12%) perished their assets, 19 beneficiaries (19%) misutilised their assets, and 9 beneficiaries disposed of their assets. The present trend of misutilisation of income generating asset has turned out to be the singular cause responsible for slow and poor impact of the programme on alleviation of rural poverty in the sample panchayats. Percentage of misutilisation highest in Nalanghibari village in Sikarpur G.P. Remarkable percentages of misutilisation were obtained in the annual income group of Rs. 0–2265 & Rs. 2265–3500. Quite a large number of families also had been obtained in the annual income group of Rs. 3501–4800. Misutilisation was considerable in Bamboo Craft (77.77%), Milch Cow (66.66%) and Chiramuri (43.75%).

iii) Repayment of Bank Loan: In recent times, most of the credit institutions of our study area, have been facing the poor performance of loan repayment or high level of overdue in case of

IRDP beneficiaries. In reality, the accumulation of overdue threatens to rob the credit institutions of their refinance abilities. In respect of repayment of bank loan 28 beneficiaries (28%) did not repay bank loan at all; 18 beneficiaries (18%) repaid bank loan 0-20%; 12 beneficiaries (12%) repaid 21-40%; 8 beneficiaries (8%) repaid 41-60 percent; 4 beneficiaries (4%) repaid 61-80 percent and 30 beneficiaries (30%) repaid bank loan 81-100 percent. Thus we are assuming only 30 beneficiaries were found non-defaulter because they have repaid bank loan more than 80 to 100 percent. They were found with almost regular repayment behavior. On the other hand 70 beneficiaries were found with high overdue or non-repayment of bank loan. They were classified as defaulter.

In order to examine the reasons of non-repayment of bank loan the sample survey gave the following interesting results.

Table: 6.5
Reasons for non-repayment of Banking

		No. of beneficiaries	Percentages	Rank
a)	Delay in income generation	8	11.42	4
b)	Inadequate income	14	20.00	3
c)	Assets perished & disposed	21	30.00	2
d)	Old due paid	3	4.28	5
e)	Urgent family need	24	34.30	1
	Total	70	100.00	

Source: - Primary survey.

The above result showed that urgent family need topped the list (34.30%). Next prominent cause was assets perished & disposed (30%). Inadequate income occupied 3rd position (20%). Old due paid and delay in income generation occupied respectively 4th & 5th position.

iv) **Impact of Credit on Earnings:** Generally, the borrowers for the purpose of their economic development take loans. That is why borrowers are generally termed as 'beneficiaries' in the language of banking and other concerns. However, the borrower generally achieves the term 'economic development' when there is net increment in annual income by the judicious use of credit in comparison to annual income before the use of credit. During our field study, we have taken into account of such net increment of income as a sign of economic development. On the contrary, if the borrowers fail to add some net increment of income to his annual income, it is presumed that they have not achieved economic development. Thus to find out the extent to which the borrowed funds have been judiciously used, information was gathered from the field study of rural borrowers regarding their income before and after the use of credit. Table: 6.6 exhibit the impact of credit on earnings of the borrowing households.

Table: 6.6
Impact of Credit on Earnings.

Percentage increase in income	No. of respondents
Nil	40 (40)
Upto 20	8 (8)
20 - 40	14 (14)
40 – 80	20 (20)
80 – 100	12 (12)
100 & Above	6 (6)
Total	100 (100)

Note:- Figures in the brackets are percentage.

Source:- Primary survey.

It is seen from the table: 6.6 that considerably large number (40 percent) of borrowing household could not make a judicious use of credit as they reported to have no increase in their earnings after the use of credit. Another group of household (8 percent) could get a marginal increase (around 20 percent) in their yearly incomes. 14

percent of the borrowing household could get an increase in their earning ranging between 20 to 40 percent 20 percent of the borrowing households could get an increase in their earning by a reasonably good margin ranging between 40 to 80 percent over their previous levels of memo, 12 percent of the borrowing households could get an increase in their earning ganging between 80 to 100 percent of their previous levels of income.

Households registering more than 100 percent increase in their years income due to the judicious use of credit numbered only a few (6 percent). Thus the overall performance in the rural borrowers enhancing their family incomes is indicative of a more or less judicious use of credit by these people.

The following limitations have been found in case of proper implementation of IRDP through DRDA in the sample panchyats as well as in the district.¹³

1. Wrong and slow identification of beneficiaries by the Govt. machinery.
2. Misutilisation of income generating assets.
3. Lack of infrastructure facilities.
4. Low recovery of bank loan.
5. Low Per family investment.
6. Ignorance in regard to consumption credit to the Poor assisted families initially.
7. Lack of guidance supervision and follow up action at different levels.
8. Lack of marketing facilities.
9. Acute shortage of DRDA staff at block and village level.

Unless these difficulties are overcome this Programme may assume the shape of only subsidy giving Programme

SECTION-B

e) Basic Approach of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) to the Target Group of People through Zilla Parishad.

Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) was Launched in April 1989 after merging the National Rural Employment Programme (NREP) and the Rural Labour Employment Guarantee Programme (RLEGP). The main objective of the programme is to generate additional gainful employment for the unemployed and under employed persons in the rural areas by creation of community productive assets on the onehand and to improve the overall quality of life in rural areas on the other hand. JRY is specially targeted to help people below the poverty line. Preference is to be given to scheduled Castes, the scheduled tribe and freed bonded labourers. At least 30% of the employment is to be provided to women under the JRY¹⁴.

The JRY is a centrally of sponsored scheme and expenditure is shared between the centre and the states in the proportion of 80:20. It is administered by the Zilla Parishad at the district level and by the gram panchayats at the village level. JRY has three main components - General JRY, Million well scheme (MWS) and India Awaas Yojana (IAY). Under MWS, irrigation facilities are extended to lands belonging to small and marginal farmers including bargadars. 30 percent of the total resources are earmarked for MWS. Under IAY houses are provided free of cost to the members of the SC/ST, freed bonded labourers. The permissible expenditure for each house under IAY has been extended from Rs. 14,000 to Rs. 20,000. 10% of the total resources of JRY are earmarked for the IAY¹⁵.

After providing for the earmarked sectors of the IAY & the MWS at least 80% of the remaining funds are distributed directly to the gram Panchayats under general JRY for social forestry construction of roads & buildings, individual beneficiary schemes and other economically productive assets in the villages. Under general JRY there is larger

scope for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) to choose the nature of work. The presence of poor in the power structure and decision making process of PRIs can be felt in the selection of work under JRY village Panchayats are preparing annual action plan under various heads considering the decision of the gram sabha. Finally Panchayat Samity and Zilla Parishad approve all those plans respectively¹⁶.

JRY was introduced in the district of Cooch Behar under the supervision of Zilla Parishad from the year 1989-90, covering every single panchayat of the district keeping an eye for generation of gainful employment for the unemployed and under employed men and women in rural areas, creation of substantial employment by strengthening the rural infrastructure and creation of social assets in the villages. Since 80 percent of the JRY funds are directly made available to the panchayats, they constitute their single largest source of finance; most of the public works executed by the Panchayats in the district are sourced from these funds. Here also by and large, the list of works as identified in gram sabha and finalised by the respective panchayat, is formally approved by the Panchayat Samity and Zilla Parishad, Cooch Behar. Thus PRI's have a great role and involvement in the matter of implementation of JRY in the district of Cooch Behar. ¹⁷

f) Progress on the Implementation of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY) in the Sample Panchayat Khagrabari through Zilla Parishad.

JRY has been implemented as the single largest employment generation Programme for the rural poor in all 128-gram panchayats in the district. Khagrabari gram panchayat with sincere efforts has been implementing the programme since inception keeping proper co-ordination with panchayat samiti in the block level and Zilla Parishad in the district level. This sample panchayat has been identifying the list of works for the villages according to priorities on the proposals of the meetings of gram sabha regularly. Money is allocated and spent under

different heads as per annual action plan. Bulk amount of money is mainly spent for the development of rural infrastructure namely construction oriented works for the generation of gainful employment and income for the target group of people who are living below the poverty line. The progress made in the matter of implementation of JRY through Zilla Parishad and obviously its impact, in the sample panchayat Khagrabari over last 10 years (1990–91 to 1999–2000) has been evaluated in different tables.

Table 6.7

Distribution of Expenditure and Mandays Achieved under J.R.Y scheme of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat (1990-91 to 1999-2000)

Year	Grant Received (Rs.)	Expenditure (Rs.)	Wages (Rs.)	Material (Rs.)	Mandays achieved	Targeted Mandays
1990-91	455282	232830 (51.14)	139725 (60.01)	93105 (39.99)	5970 (24.51)	24353
1991-92	696472	510594 (73.31)	270532 (59.99)	240061 (47.02)	11459 (54.62)	20979
1992-93	1005171	490932 (48.84)	294559 (60.00)	196373 (40.00)	12459 (58.89)	21155
1993-94	1183630	1079613 (91.21)	524910 (48.62)	554703 (51.38)	20814 (83.98)	24785
1994-95	1156751	1156086 (99.94)	811040 (70.15)	345045 (29.85)	24792 (165.53)	14977
1995-96	859493	753466 (87.66)	270376 (35.88)	483090 (64.12)	6963 (62.90)	11070
1996-97	680981	474255 (69.64)	260680 (54.97)	213575 (45.03)	5460 (28.95)	18860
1997-98	1327155	891508 (67.17)	608896 (68.29)	282612 (31.70)	13389 (135.39)	9889
1998-99	1364081	1278623 (93.74)	845566 (66.13)	433057 (33.87)	14942 (121.05)	12344
1999-2000	1744282	1575866 (90.34)	509952 (32.36)	1065914 (67.64)	9139 (48.91)	18686
Total	10473298	8443773	4536236	3907535	125387	177098

N.B. Parenthesis indicates Percentages. Source : 1. Official records of the Khagrabari gram panchayat from 1990-91 to 1999-2000.

2. Personnel Computation.

From the above table 6.7 it is found that during last 10 years (1990-91 to 1999 -2000) as against the target of 177098 mandays, this GP generated employment of the order of 125387 mandays nearly 78.80 percent of the target. This is apparently encouraging achievement. If we evaluate the impact of J.R.Y. on employment generation and income in respect of 1,666 BPL families of the G.P.¹⁸ the result is not at all encouraging. As per mandays achieved over 10 years and in respect of 1,666 BPL families a JRY worker in the GP got employment only 8 days in a year and income was estimated Rs. 448 per year. Wages and material accounted respectively 53.72 & 46.28 percent of total expenditure, which is against the ratio of 60:40 under JRY manual.

Table – 6.8

Expenditure Made Under J.R.Y. Scheme on the Following Heads over the Years (90–91 to 99–2000) of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat.

SI No.	Name of the Scheme	Expenditure incurred (Rs.)	Physical Unit
1.	Road Repairing	2994401 (35.46)	206
2.	Link Road	101520 (1.20)	13
3.	I.C.D.C.S center	180000 (2.13)	5
4.	Passenger shed	210000 (2.49)	5
5.	Drain renovation culverts	482449 (5.71)	49
6.	Culverts	543481 (6.44)	17
7.	Construction of Pry. School	660000 (7.82)	6
8.	Social Forestry	472605 (5.59)	4
9.	Hume Pipe	557000 (6.59)	106
10.	Urinal	60000 (.72)	1
11.	Wooden Bridge	11769 (.14)	2
12.	Community Reading Room	182000 (2.16)	1
13.	Extension of gram panchayat office building	145404 (1.72)	2
14.	Tube Wells	31279 (.37)	8
15.	Rural Housing	7000 (.08)	2
16.	SC/ST individual Latrine	397500 (4.71)	100
17.	Composite Toilet	225543 (2.67)	8
18.	School Ground uplifting	50000 (.59)	2
19.	Sericulture	195000 (2.31)	16 bigha
20.	Irrigation Cannel	86000 (1.02)	2
21.	Houses of DWCRA	40000 (.47)	3
22.	Renovation of Ponds	18000 (.21)	3
23.	Bamboo Bridge	15000 (.17)	2
24.	Pucca Drain	362826 (4.30)	5
25.	Sishu Siksha Kendra	415000 (4.91)	5
	Total	8443777 (100.00)	

N.B. Parenthesis indicates Percentages.

Source: 1) Official records of Khagrabari G.P. for 1990-91 to 99- 2000.

2) Personal computation.

A closer look at the table-6.8 shows the pattern of expenditure under JRY in the sample Panchayat. Distribution of expenditure under various heads in JRY during last 10 years (1990-91 to 1999-2000) shows that out of a total expenditure of Rs. 8443777, road repairing and link accounted for Rs. 3095921 (36.86%), followed by Drain renovation Rs. 482449 (5.71 percent), culverts Rs. 543481 (6.44%), construction of

Primary schools Rs. 660000 (7.82%), Social forestry Rs. 472605 (5.59%), Hume pipe Rs. 557000 (6.59%), SC/ST individual latrine Rs. 397500 (4.71%), Pacca drain Rs. 362826 (4.30%) and Sishu Siksha Kendra Rs. 415000 (4.91%). Pattern of expenditure denotes that, by and large, Panchayats have given priority to construction oriented works than to development oriented ones. However, considering the fact that there is need to develop rural infrastructure, the efforts of Panchayats are timely and more importantly beneficial to people living in such villages.

g) Progress on Implementation of Jawahar Rozgar Yojana in the Sample Panchayat Sikarpur through Zilla Parishad.

JRY has also been implemented in Sikarpur G.P. since 1989 as a major anti-poverty programme. Sikarpur gram panchayat members are highly sincere to carry out development tasks authorised by the programme. This sample panchayat has been implementing those works for the villages, which are identified in the gram sabha meetings as per needs & priorities of the village people. Money is allocated and spent as per annual action plan prepared by them. In this G.P. also, lion share of money is spent for road infrastructure development. The progress made in the matter of implementation of JRY and its impact, in the sample panchayat Sikarpur for the years 1990-91 to 1999-2000 is shown in the following tables.

Table – 6.9

Distribution of Expenditure and Mandays Achieved under J.R.Y Scheme of Sikarpur Gram Panchayat (1990-91 to 1999-2000)

Year	Grant Received Rs.	Expenditure Rs.	Wages Rs.	Material Rs.	Mandays Achieved	Mandays Targeted
90-91	399467	247838 (62.04)	171092 (69.00)	76747 (31.00)	4493 (80.01)	5616
91-92	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
92-93	435295	430259 (98.84)	288214 (66.98)	142044 (33.02)	12481 (80.00)	15600
93-94	1048053	496649 (47.39)	352668 (71.00)	143981 (29.00)	13402 (80.00)	16752
94-95	931916	716542 (76.89)	469866 (65.57)	246676 (34.43)	16242 (80.00)	20302
95-96	1269910	614251 (48.37)	446599 (72.71)	167652 (27.29)	11267 (80.00)	14083
96-97	1119547	1088450 (97.22)	592420 (54.43)	496030 (45.57)	15475 (80.00)	19343
97-98	1269990	1261502 (99.33)	637972 (50.57)	623530 (49.53)	12553 (80.01)	15690
98-99	1317618	759925 (57.67)	502178 (66.08)	257743 (33.92)	10310 (55.65)	18526
99-2000	1882431	932699 (49.55)	272293 (29.19)	660406 (70.81)	4109 (80.00)	5136
Total	9674227	6548115	3733302	2814809	100332	131048

N.B Parenthesis indicates Percentages Source : 1. Official records of the Sikarpur Gram Panchayat from 1990-1991 to 1999-2000.
2. Personal Computation.

It is evident from the table 6.9 that during 1990-91 to 1999-2000, as against the target of 131048 mandays, the sample GP generated employment of the order of 100332 mandays nearly 76.56 percentage of the target. This is promising achievement. But if we evaluate the

impact of JRY on employment generation and income in depth with respect to +596 BPL families of the G.P¹⁹ the result is not at all promising. As per mandays achieved over the years and in respect of BPL families, a JRY worker got employment here only 6 days in a year and income was estimated only Rs. 336. This is highly disappointing picture. Wages and material accounted respectively 57:43 percent of total expenditure as against the ratio of 60:40 under JRY manual.

Table – 6.10

Expenditure Made Under J.R.Y. Scheme on the Following Heads over the Years (1990-1991 to 1999-2000) of Sikarpur G.P

Sl. No	Name of the Scheme	Expenditure incurred (in Rs.)	Physical Unit.
1.	Link Road	5201185 (7.94)	17
2.	Culverts	118500 (1.81)	4
3.	I.C.D.S.Centre	513770 (7.85)	15
4.	Construction of Pry. School Building	849379 (12.97)	19
5.	Construction of High School Building	189768 (2.90)	3
6.	Road Repairing	2013741 (30.75)	80
7.	Furniture of Pry. School	71740 (1.09)	40
8.	Cows, Goats for SC/ST	114600 (1.75)	154
9.	Social Forestry Project	67732 (10.3)	5
10.	Sanitary of Pry. School	274117 (4.19)	23
11.	Passenger Stand	74502 (1.14)	3
12.	Sanitary for SC/ST	193784 (2.96)	40
13.	Shallow Tubewell for SC/ST	182485 (2.79)	35
14.	Pump set for SC.	151500 (2.31)	10
15.	Grounds repairing for Pry. School.	283685 (4.33)	7
16.	Housing for SC/ST	45954 (0.70)	4
17.	Ring of Well	49884 (0.76)	40
18.	Spray machine for SC/ST	19500 (0.29)	21
19.	Grounds for Market Development.	58160 (0.89)	1
20.	Repairing for Grounds of High School	89440 (1.37)	2
21.	Extension of G.P office	347328 (5.30)	
22.	Tailoring for SC/ST	33286 (0.51)	34
23.	Hume Pipe for Road	141021 (2.15)	126
24.	Ring of Well for SC/ST	109230 (1.67)	2
25.	Cannel.	34837 (0.53)	
Total		6548055 (100.00)	

N.B Parenthesis indicates Pcentages

Source : 1. Official records of the Sikarpur Gram Panchayat from 1990-1991 to 1999-2000.
2. Personel Computation.

Table 6.10 presents the pattern of expenditure under JRY in the sample Panchayat. Distribution of expenditure under various heads during 1990-1991 to 1999-2000 shows that out of a total expenditure of Rs. 6548055, link road & road repairing accounted Rs. 2533856 (38.69%), followed by ICDS Centre Rs. 513770 (7.85%), construction of primary school building Rs. 849379 (12.97%), Sanitary of primary schools Rs. 274117 (4.19%), grounds repairing for primary schools Rs. 283685 (4.33%) and extension of G.P office Rs. 347328 (5.30%).

Pattern of expenditure in both the GPs exhibits that by and large, Panchayats have given priority to construction oriented works for infrastructure development of the villages rather than to development oriented works related with asset creation of permanent nature in the villages. Although JRY has made some headway in providing employment but the target of providing 90-100 days of employment during off agricultural season for every registered person is a distant goal. However, considering the poor performance of the programme in the study area it can hardly be denied the need to develop rural infrastructure and the important beneficial role-played by the village panchayats to the people living in such villages.

h) Survey Results to Evaluate the Impact of JRY on the Perception of Gram Sabha Meeting and Village Development.

In order to evaluate the impact of JRY on the perception of village development, we have conducted also a sample survey in our selected gram panchayats viz. Khagrabari and Sikarpur. For our purpose four villages (two from each GP) and 100 villagers (25 from each village) have been selected randomly. Name of the villages are- Mahisbathan, Banchukamari, Nalangibari & Mohanpur. Relevant information data have been collected through questionnaire & personal interview. This kind of evaluation has become very essential in Panchayat Raj development administration since Panchayats work very closely with the people. With increasing emphasis on planning from below it has

become necessary to see to what extent the felt needs and aspirations of the rural people have been given priority and more importantly what perception they have attained about the development of the villages by panchayats & JRY.

i.) Observation on Gram Sabha Meeting:

The action process of planning for the development of the villages is devised at Gram Sabha, a meeting place of all the voters. It is here the needs and aspirations of not only the individual households but also of the village community as a whole are identified. The 1993 Act enjoins the Gram Sabha important responsibilities like identifying beneficiaries of various development programmes, motivating the people towards community development and welfare activities giving suggestions and making recommendations to gram panchayat etc. The collected information on the working of Gram Sabhas in our selected Panchayats reveals that by and large, the sample Panchayats had called meetings as per norms to discuss various issues relating to the development of the villages. But in reality, the meetings are vague. 85 percent respondents (villagers) pointed out that final decision making process is found to be unilateral and centralised around the Pradhan or a small coterie. In the meetings of the Gram Sabha they pass resolutions imposing their own decisions upon the common citizens of the villages. Only 15 percent respondents (villagers) pointed out that development works are done in the villages as per decisions of the Gram Sabha meetings. As per citizens participation is concerned, on an average 30 to 35 percent of the electorate normally take active part in the meetings. The citizens who get any benefits under the poverty alleviation programmes hardly show any interest in attending the meetings. Majority villagers

commented that Gram Sabha meetings are held at the behest of pradhan and some influential Panchayat members.

ii) Impact of JRY: Village Perception:

Regarding the impact of existing devolution on development the general verdict is that existing devolution has only marginally speeded up village development. It can be seen from the following table 6.11

Table- 6.11
Estimated Impact of Devolution on village Development
(Percentage)

Village	Not at all	Marginally	Quite a lot
Mahisbathan	34	56	10
Banchukamari	37	52	11
Nalangibari	22	64	14
Mohanpur	28	55	17
Total (100%)	30.25	56.75	13

Source: Household Survey (N=100)

The above table shows that on an average 57 percent respondents are of the opinion that devolution has a marginally positive impact on the village development; 30 percent are as the opinion that devolution has not at all any impact on village development and 13 percent respondents believe that the impact is quite substantial.

In order to find out the principal reason for the poor performance of panchayats that on an average 56 percent respondents identified village level corruption and 5 percent identified block level corruption as the main reasons, followed by shortage of funds (39 percent). Majority respondents are also with the opinion that allocation and expenditure are not transparent and villagers are by and large not involved in the implementation of the programme.

Table 6.12
Reasons for Poor pPrformance of the panchayats.
(Percentages)

Villages	Village level corruption	Block level corruption	Shortage of funds	Total
Mahisbathan	60	8	32	100
Banchukamari	70	6	24	100
Nalangibari	52	4	44	100
Mohanpur	42	2	56	100

Source: Household Survey (N=100)

From the field survey²¹ in two selected GP's the following observations have been made regarding evaluation of JRY.

1. The village Panchayats in the selected GP's has spent more than 70 percent available funds.
2. The wage and non-wage component of the expenditure of JRY works undertake by the village Panchayats at the GP level was 54:46 in Khagrabari and 57:43 in Sikarpur.
3. In both the GP, Muster Rolls were maintained.
4. JRY has made some headway in providing employment but the target of providing 90-100 days of employment for every registered person is a distant goal. In Khagrabari GP a JRY worker got employment only 8 days in a' year and in Sikarpur a JRY worker got employment only 6 days in a year.
5. Total absence of voluntary organisations in its implementation seemed to be a serious weakness.
6. It was felt that JRY needs larger devolution of funds and greater intensification of implementation.

Summary:

This Chapter is mainly concerned with the role of Panchayats in implementing the major rural development programmes (Anti Poverty Programmes) viz IRDP & JRY and also with evaluating the impact of such programmes on the rural economy of Cooch Behar. DRDA, Panchayat Samities, Gram Panchayats, Lead Bank have been playing an important role in the matter of implementation of IRDP Programme in the district. They have been identifying the beneficiaries, drawing different viable bankable projects on local resources providing bank loan on subsidised Projects to the poorest of the poor so that they can employ themselves usefully to earn greater incomes and thus cross the poverty line.

Cooch Behar Zilla Parishad has been providing important leadership in implementing the largest single employment programme (JRY) in the district keeping proper coordination with panchayat samities at the block level and panchayats at the village level. Under the supervision of Zilla Parishad, Panchayat Samities & gram Panchayats have been assigned great task of fulfilling the objective of JRY in respect of generating additional gainful employment for the unemployed and underemployed persons in rural areas by creating community productive assets and to improve the overall quality of life in rural areas. The programme is specifically targeted to help people below the poverty line. Gram panchayat have been identifying the beneficiaries of JRY and also the list of works for the development of the villages according to the priorities on the proposals of the meetings of gram sabha. Money is allocated and spent under different heads as per annual action plan prepared by them. Under decentralised planning PRIs have been performing great role for planning, implementation and monitoring all such rural development programmes in the villages of the district involving rural people in power structure & decision making.

Regarding progress on implementation of IRD Programmes in the sample GPs (table 6.1 & 6.3) show that a reasonable number of weaker section people have been covered under this programme of which 43 percent beneficiaries are SC in Khagrabari and 70 percent beneficiaries are SC in Sikarpur. From the viewpoint of economic viability and option of the beneficiaries the popular schemes in Khagrabari GP are - Chira Muri, Vegetable Vending, Bamboo Craft, Goatery, Rickshawvan, Furniture shop, Milch Cow (Table 6.2). In Sikarpur, the popular schemes are – Milch Cow, Rickshawvan, Chiramuri, Goatary, Vegetable Vending, Bamboo craft (Table 6.4).

Field survey results to evaluate the impact of IRD Programme on the target groups of people in the sample G.P.s show that 60 percent beneficiaries crossed the poverty line; 19 percent beneficiaries misutilised their assets; 12 percent perished their assets and 9 percent beneficiaries disposed their assets. Highest number of families crossed the poverty line belong to the annual income group of Rs. 3501–4800 (28%). Schemes that helped most of the families to cross the poverty line were tertiary (42%) & primary (18%). Remarkable percentages of misutilisation were obtained in the annual income group of Rs. 0–2265 & Rs. 2265–3500. Misutilisation was considerable in bamboo craft (77.77%), milch Cow (66.66%) and chiramuri (43.75%). Regarding repayment of bank loan, field survey result showed quite a disappointing picture. Only 30 percent beneficiaries were found non-defaulter whereas 70 percent beneficiaries were found defaulter. Among the reasons of non-repayment of bank loan urgent family need topped the list (34.30%); asset perished & disposed (30%); inadequate income (20%); old due paid and delay in income generation (15.70%). In reality, the accumulation of overdue threatens to rob the credit institutions of their refinance abilities in this region.

In regard to the impact of credit on earnings table 6.6 depicted that rural borrowers (60%) utilised credit in enhancing their incomes more or less judiciously. Only 40% borrowers failed to use credit judiciously and they reported to have no increase in their earnings after the use of credit.

Although the scheme IRDP was poised for right curve and the overall atmosphere was congenial, desired result could not be achieved in the sample GPs as well as the district as a whole for some inherent drawbacks. The drawbacks are – wrong and slow identification of beneficiaries, misutilisation of income generating assets, lack of infrastructure facilities, low recovery of bank loan, low per family investment, lack of guidance supervision and follow up action, lack of marketing facilities and acute shortage of DRDA staff at block & village level.

The overall performance of JRY programme in Cooch Behar region is not encouraging. Regarding progress made in the matter of implementation of JRY programme in the sample GPs (Table 6.7 & 6.9) show that in Khagrabari GP, a JRY worker got employment only 8 days in a year and income was estimated Rs. 448 per year. Whereas in Sikarpur a JRY worker got employment only 6 days in a year and income was estimated only Rs. 336 per year.

Pattern of expenditure under JRY in both the GPs (Table 6.8 & 6.10) exhibits that by and large, panchayats have given priority to construction works for infrastructural development of the villages rather than to development oriented works related to asset creation of permanent nature in the villages. However considering the poor performance of the programme in the study area, it can hardly be denied the need to develop rural infrastructure and the important beneficial role-played by the village panchayats to the people living in such villages.

Field survey result to evaluate the impact of JRY on perception of gram sabha meeting and village development shows that 85 per cent respondents (villagers) are of the opinion that the meetings are vague and final decision making process is found to be unilateral and centralised around the pradhan or a small coterie. In the meetings of Gram Sabha they pass resolutions imposing their own decisions upon the common citizens of the villages. Only 15 per cent respondents pointed out that development works are done in the villages as per decisions of gram sabha meetings. As per citizens participation is concerned, on an average 30 to 35 per cent of the electorate normally take active part in the meetings. The citizens who do not get any benefits under poverty alleviation programme show any interest in attending the meetings.

Regarding the impact of existing devolution on development (table 6.11) on an average 57 per cent respondents are of the opinion that devolution has a marginally positive impact on the village development; 30 per cent are of the opinion that devolution has not at all any impact on village development and 13 per cent respondents believe that impact is quite substantial. In order to find out principal reasons for the poor performance of panchayats, on an average 56 per cent respondents identified village level corruption; 5 per cent identified block level corruption and 39 per cent pointed out shortage of funds. Majority respondents are also with the opinion that allocation and expenditure are not transparent and villagers are by and large not involved in the implementation of the programme.

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Chapter - VII

Summary & Conclusion

On the recommendations of Balwantrai Mehta Committee 'Panchayat Raj System' or 'democratic decentralisation' is one of the important political innovations of Independent India. Many experiments of PR are going in most of the states of India since last four decades. Academicians, politicians and administrators have with great interest debated the role of PR in rural India. They are now the statutory elected local bodies with necessary resources, power and authority to plan and implement the development programmes in the countryside. Contribution to growth and welfare is the core strategy of Panchayat Raj. Previously bureaucrats discharged the development programmes, a system that received widespread criticism as inefficient, corrupt and inequitable. There were many evidences that the poor functioning of local public services in India relates to the centralised and non-participatory nature of their management. Moreover, there was little scope for citizens to voice their demands in the formal institutional structures.

The experience of West Bengal under three-tier Panchayati Raj system stands in sharp contrast with that of other states in India and together with land reform it has been credited for playing an important role in the impressive economic turnaround of the state. It is the first and only major Indian state which has had timely panchayat election as a party basis regularly every five years since 1978, a year after with Left front government was elected to Power in the state with a massive and growing mandate. LF government, by amending the West Bengal panchayat Act of 1973 has revitalised the panchayat system and made this sector effective bodies participating in rural development process. Many observers feel that they have brought about a churning of the submerged humanity in

rural areas and created a high degree of political awareness among all sections. The concerned effort at the political level acts effectively to change rural power structure in favour of marginalised or suppressed groups. Under strong political stability and long continuity of governance of LF as the state level, the Panchayat Raj system has been working as a state policy to usher a new social order for the socio-economic transformation of the rural community of West Bengal.

Keeping in view the wider aims of Panchayat Raj programme under LFG in West Bengal, the present study was undertaken to evaluate the performance of panchayats in respect to rural development in a backward district Cooch Behar with the following objectives -

- (a) To present the overall picture of PR in the district.
- (b) To study caste, class and power structure.
- (c) To study the panchayat resources and pattern of expenditure on development activities.
- (d) To assess the role of panchayats and poverty alleviation programmes on the rural economy of Cooch Behar.

The study has been done with respect to two sample panchayats of the district. In the foregoing chapters, discussions were carried out at length. An attempt is made in this chapter to bring together all major findings and suggestions for future prospect.

Some agents are considered to be catalyst of development. North Bengal especially Cooch Behar district of North Bengal is a poor and backward area. Cooch Behar is a no-industry district; its rate of urbanisation is lower than both state and all India average; Communicative system is extremely primitive; it has a large scheduled caste population; the proportion of scheduled caste population is higher than the West Bengal state average, agriculture of this region is very primitive and handicapped by preponderance of food crops, low irrigation facilities, low

fertiliser consumption and consequently it may be treated as a very poor and backward rural area of West Bengal. The district symbolises the poverty of India - Poverty in all its manifestations.

In Cooch Behar, local government institutions had been functioning in a fairly organised way under the political stability of LF to transform the rural community of the district. As an authority of the state government, they are now entrusted with civic, social and economic functions. LF mainly CPI (M) has one of its strongest bases both in terms of popular support and in terms of organisational maturity which has been reflected in last five panchayat election (1978-1998). In 1978 panchayat elections LF got 75.43 percent seats in gram panchayat, 88.88 percent seats in panchayat Samity and 100 seats in Zilla Parishad. In subsequent panchayat elections same picture was reflected.

CPI (M) has also proved its strongest political control in the selected gram panchayats viz. Khagrabari and Sikarpur over last panchayat elections. Both the gram panchayats are absolutely dominated by the CPI (M) panchayat members. LF's agrarian policy gave larger security to the sharecroppers, agricultural labourers and marginal farmers of the villages. Downtrodden villagers have the strong belief that party CPI (M) is pro-people party.

Regarding caste, class and power structure of the panchayat members, both from the macro & micro level studies, it has become quite evident that there is remarkable representation of weaker sections in the district of Cooch Behar. Their direct involvement in different rural development programmes restricted the old power relations in the villages with tremendous politicisation.

Regarding caste of the panchayat members in the district it has been observed that 54.76 percent gram panchayat members belong to scheduled caste and 44.76 percent belong to general caste. Scheduled

caste women representation accounted to 20.28 percent which is much higher than general caste women representation (15.01 %).

Similar result has been obtained at micro level with reference to two samples GPs of the district. On an average 46 percent gram panchayat members in Khagrabari GP are scheduled caste whereas in Sikarpur it accounted to 85.16 percent. Caste system in the villages of the district has lost significantly the stigmatic and discriminatory meaning.

Class character of the panchayat representatives in terms of landholding, occupation and educational status also provides alarming results. Regarding landholding it has been observed that 11.70 percent are landless family, 4.2 percent are patta holders and 54.95 percent are marginal farmers who have a land upto 2.49 acres. In terms of occupational pattern, marginal farmers, agricultural labourers & bargadars combinely accounted to 64.39 percent in the district. Educational status also shows that 60.72 percent have an educational qualification upto lower & upper primary level. Thus rural power structure in the district is heavily in favour of weaker sections who have low educational status and who emerge from locally lower caste.

Class character of the panchayat members in terms of sample GPs also confirms the same result. On an average 58.04 percent panchayat members in Khagrabari GP belong to landless families, 26.6 percent have the land holding upto 2.49 acres (marginal farmers). On the other hand in Sikarpur GP on an average 66.46 percent members have the landholding upto 4.49 acres (marginal and small farmers).

The representation of elected members in Khagrabari GP mostly have come from occupational background of marginal & small peasants (22.70 percent), housewives (20.75 percent), teachers (14.81 percent), small shop owner & small business (10.69 percent), unemployed (10.20 percent), other services (9.71 percent), agricultural labourers (7.43

percent). Most of the elected housewives have come from the families of marginal and landless farmers. On the other hand in Sikarpur GP, the elected panchayat members, mostly have come from the occupational categories of marginal & small peasants (54.12 percent), medium & big peasants (21.11 percent), teacher (7.06 percent), unemployed (6.46 percent) & housewives (35.41 percent).

In Khagrabari GP, local leaders who are in power structure have comparatively better educational qualifications than that of Sikarpur GP. 26.64 percent members are secondary, 25.78 percent are graduate, 21.51 percent are lower primary, 18.98 percent are upper primary & 8.80 percent higher secondary. In Sikarpur, 61.60 percent members are upper primary, 18.66 percent are lower primary, 17.58 percent are secondary and 7.08 percent are graduates.

Performance of Panchayats in poverty alleviation programme on rural economy of Cooch Behar is not at all encouraging. Field survey results to evaluate the impact of IRD programme on the target group of people in the sample GPs show that 60 panchayat beneficiaries crossed the poverty line; 19 percent misutilised their assets; 12 percent perished their assets and 9 percent disposed their assets. Highest number of families crossed the poverty line belong to the annual income group of Rs. 3501-4800 (28 percent). Schemes which helped most of the families to cross the poverty line were tertiary (42 percent) & primary (18 percent). Remarkable percentages of misutilisation were obtained in the annual group of Rs. 0-2265 & Rs. 2265-3500. Misutilisation was considerable in Bamboo craft (77.77 percent), milch cow (66.66 percent), Chiramuri (43.75 percent). Regarding repayment of Bank loan survey result showed quite a disappointing picture. Only 30 percent beneficiaries were found non-defaulters whereas 70 percent were found defaults. Among the reasons of non-repayment Bank loan, urgent family need topped the list (34.30

percent), asset perished & disposed (30 percent), inadequate income generation (20 percent), old due paid and delay in income generation (15.70 percent).

As regard to impact of credit on earnings summery result showed that 60 percent beneficiaries utilised credit in enhancing their incomes more or less judiciously. 40 percent borrowers failed to use it effectively. Desired result under the scheme could not be achieved for some important limitations. The limitations are: wrong and slow identification of beneficiaries, misutilisation of income generating assets lack of infrastructure facilities, low recovery of Bank loan, low per family investment, lack of guidance, supervision and follow up action, lack of marketing facilities & acute shortage of DRDA staff at block and village level.

Field survey result to evaluate the performance of JRY programme in the sample GPs show in Khagrabari GP, JRY worker got employment only 8 days in a year and income was estimated Rs. 448 per year. On the other hand in Sikarpur G.P. a JRY worker got employment only 6 days in a year and income was estimated only Rs. 336 per year.

As regards Pattern of expenditure under JRY in both the GPs it has been observed that by and large, panchayats have given priority to construction works for infrastructure development of the villages rather than to development oriented works related to asset creation of permanent nature in the villages. However considering the poor performance of the programme in the study area, it can hardly be denied the need to develop rural infrastructure and the important beneficial role-played by the village panchayats to the people living in such villages.

Field survey result also to evaluate the impact of JRY on perception of Gram Sabha meeting and village development shows that 85

per cent respondents (villagers) are of the opinion that the meetings are vague and final decision making process is found to be unilateral and centralised around the pradhan or a small coterie. In the meetings of Gram Sabha they pass resolutions imposing their own decisions upon the common citizens of the villages. Only 15 per cent respondents pointed out that development works are done in the villages as per decisions of gram sabha meetings. As per citizens participation is concerned, on an average 30 to 35 per cent of the electorate normally take active part in the meetings. The citizens who do not get any benefits under poverty alleviation programme show any interest in attending the meetings.

Regarding the impact of existing devolution on development, on an average 57 per cent respondents are of the opinion that devolution has a marginally positive impact on the village development; 30 per cent are of the opinion that devolution has not at all any impact on village development and 13 per cent respondents believe that impact is quite substantial. In order to find out principal reasons for the poor performance of panchayats, on an average 56 per cent respondents identified village level corruption; 5 per cent identified block level corruption and 39 per cent pointed out shortage of funds. Majority respondents are also with the opinion that allocation and expenditure are not transparent and villagers are by and large not involved in the implementation of the programme.

As regards to panchayat resources it has been observed that finances of panchayat exclusively depends on grants-in-aid. Own resources generated by gram panchayats are meagre and it constitutes 4 percent and 6 percent in Sikirpur & Khagrabari gram panchayat respectively. On the contrary, grants-in-aid constitute on and above 94 percent of the total resources. Own resources, which include tax revenue and non-tax revenue, constitute a significant source of income to gram

panchayat. Among the tax revenue, house tax is an important source of revenue but there is a poor drive on the part of the panchayat to effectively mobilise the resources from this source. Operational mobilisation as well as effectiveness of this source of revenue has been remaining poor. Non tax revenue is also the significant factor in the generation of income to G.P. It is evident from the study that percentage of revenue to total revenue earned during the years is more than 70 percent in Sikarpur G.P.

It has been also observed that expenditure during the period i.e. from 1990-91 to 1999-2000 increased considerably on development activities but no balanced approach is followed in respect of expenditure. Education and health, which are the most important parameter of human development, received the least attention in respect of expenditure over the years. On an average, 5.96 percent and 7.30 percent of the total own resources are spent on education in Khagrabari and Sikarpur G.P. respectively. Expenditure under health is decreased from 18.73 percent in the year 1990-91 to 2.57 percent in the year 1999-2000 in Khagrabari G.P. The same picture is noticed in Sikarpur G.P. in this respect. It is, no doubt, a hindrance to rural development. The proportion of expenditure on miscellaneous item has been larger than the development activities found in Sikarpur G.P during the years.

For the successful functioning of the panchayat system for the development of a backward district Cooch Behar the following suggestion are to be followed:

i) **Tax Revenue:**

- i) Regarding the levy of house tax the rates should be revised at least once in five years.

- ii) Campaign and awareness programme should be introduced among the villagers regarding the collection of tax.
- iii) Before allowing any grant or issuing any certificate to the people of the area under G.P. tax clearance from them should be enforced.
- iv) Agricultural income tax should be incorporated and it should be transferred to the hands of Panchayats.
- v) A system of strict and regular supervision over tax collection should exist.
- vi) Proper autonomy should be given to the panchayats to collect tax.
- vii) Incentives should be given to the Panchayats for better tax efforts.

ii) Non tax revenue:

- i) The rate of levy of fees should be increased to not less than one hundred percent once in five years.
- ii) All leviable items should be assessed and fees to be collected.

iii) Expenditure:

- i) A balanced approach on expenditure policy is necessary for development works.
- ii) Among development expenditures, education, health and welfare should be given priority. Their shares of total expenditure should be 60 percent; 10 percent and 5 percent respectively.

iv) Devolution of Power and Decentralised Planning:

- i) Development planning of the villages and selection of beneficiaries should be free from politicisation. Both the things are to be done in the meetings of Gram Sabha fairly with significant participation of the villagers.
- ii) The village constituency meetings must be organised mandatory twice in a year after adequate campaign, ensuring

large scale participation of all categories of voters, particularly women and those belonging to backward classes.

- iii) An Outline of Development Plan (O.D.P.) on the villages should be prepared by task force in the village constituency meeting. This will be followed by development seminars at the gram panchayat levels with village council members, resource persons, govt. officials working at the village and the block level, and representatives all political parties. Thereafter O.D.P. will be integrated with the block and district level planning for implementation.
- iv) Elected panchayat members officially must be liable to produce accounts for the use of public funds and implementation of the public projects before the villagers in the Gram Sabha meeting.
- v) Guidance, supervision and follow-up action are needed at different levels.
- vi) Women candidates, thanks to reservation, have started taking part in public affairs as a proxy for their male family members. In most of the cases, they are not exerting themselves in decision making properly. So there should be training for the women panchayats by the expert personnel.
- vii) Timely, more funds for J.R.Y. programme should be provided by the governments to ensure employment of the 100 days in a year to needy persons. Moreover, panchayats should give priority to "development oriented works" related to asset creation of permanent nature in the villages.
- viii) Adequate staffs at D.R.D.A. and block level are needed for the proper implementation of rural development programmes in the villages.

Appendix-IIA

The Institutional Framework for Decentralized Planning

The following is a summary of the constitutions, functions and responsibilities of the district planning bodies established in 1985. It is based upon orders from the Governor of West Bengal, which were circulated to the districts by the Development and planning Department in May 1985.

The District Planning and Co-ordination Committee (D.P.C.C.):

- Chairperson : A minister of State of the Government of West Bengal.
- Vice-Chairperson : Sabhadhipati (Chairperson) of the Zilla Parishad.
- Member Secretary : The District Magistrate.
- Other Members : Karkadhyakshas (Chairpersons) of the Standing Committees of the Zilla Parishad; sabhapatis (Chairperson) of all Panchayat Samities; Chairpersons of the Municipalities in the District; The members of the Legislative Assembly (M.L.A.s) of the District; Members of Parliament (Union M.P.s) of the District; One representative from each of the District's Statutory Authorities. District level officers of all Departments.

In addition the Commissioner of the Division has a permanent invitation to attend, and where there is more than one Minister/Minister of State eligible to be present, the Chair of the Council passes by rotation.

The power and functions of the D.P.C.C. are:

- (i) All District Plans and programmes formulated by the District Planning Committee (see below) are to be put up to the District Planning and Co-ordinating Council for discussion and approval.
- (ii) The D.P.C.C. reviews the progress of all district level plan schemes and programmes from time to time.
- (iii) All extant functions of the D.L.C.C. (the former District Level Coordinating Committee) have been transferred to the D.P.C.C.
- (iv) For the District of Darjeeling, an interactive linkage is to be maintained between the D.P.C.C. and the Hill Development Council.

- (v) The D.P.C.C should meet at least twice every year and a copy of its proceedings to be endorsed and sent to the State Planning Board.

The District Planning Committee (D.P.C.):

Chairperson : Sabhadhipati (Chairperson) of the Zilla Parishad.

Member Secretary : The District Magistrate.

Other Members : Karkadhyakshas of the Sthayee Committees of the Zilla Parishad;

Sabhapatis of all Panchayat Samitis;

Chairpersons of the Municipalities in the District;

One representative of each of the Statutory Bodies in the District;

District Level Officer of all departments in the District.

For large districts such as 24 Parganas and Midnapore the District Planning Committee has two or more area-based sub-committees for effective running (24 Parganas has subsequently been divided into two for planning purposes).

In addition to the above members, sub divisional officers have a permanent invitation to attend, and district level officers of the permanent invitation to attend, and district level officers of the banks are invited as and when it is felt their presence is needed.

The powers and functions of the D.P.C. are:

- (i) Within the overall guidelines regarding priorities and the allocation of funds for each district indicated from the State level, the District Planning Committee is expected to formulate a set of schemes within the framework of a plan for the District as a whole. Included within this plan proposal would be schemes to be run by the Departments, by clear indication of how these balanced and integrated with one another. Schemes of a value up to five lakhs (Rs. 500,000) may be approved by the D.P.C. The annual plan prepared by the D.P.C. would be put to the D.P.C.C. for discussion and finalisation.
- (ii) Schemes of a value more than Rs. fifty thousand formulated at the Block level have to be discussed and finalized in the District Planning Committee.

- (iii) The District Planning Committee has the power to approve schemes with estimated costs not exceeding Rs. five lakhs. Schemes of a higher value have to be sent to the state Planning Board for approval. In addition if any scheme involves more than one district in its implementation, for example a drainage scheme, it also has to the State Planning Board.
- (iv) After formulating an Annual Plan and Programme for the District the D.P.C. discusses the proposals with State Planning Board. U
- (v) The D.P.C is also required to regularly evaluate and if necessary revise the implementation of the District Plan schemes being executed through the Panchayats as well as joint schemes excited through the Panchayats and Departments.

The implementation of the departmental schemes is the responsibility of the concerned departments, though there should be co-ordination between such schemes and the Panchayat-run-schemes. The implementation of Panchayat-run-schemes is conducted through the relevant panchayat body. Where there is a need for joint implementation by more than one panchayat or any other agency, in such instances the D.P.C. has the role of co-coordinating and regularly reviewing the schemes implementation.

Beneath the District level operates the Block Planning Committee (B.P.C). Is constituted as follows:

Block Planning Committee (B.P.C.)

- Chairperson : Sabhadhipati (Chair if the Panchayat Samiti)
- Member Secretary : Block Development Officer (B.D.O).
- Other Members : Karkadhyakshas of the Sthayee Committees of the P.S.U.
Prodhans of the Gram Panchayats;

The powers and functions of the B.P.C. are:

- (i) Within the guidelines regarding priorities and financial allocations for each block indicated by the District Planning Committee, the Block Planning Committee formulates a set of schemes that have a command area within the Block.

- (ii) Where necessary or relevant the B.P.C can propose a scheme covering a command area which extends over an adjoining block, but such a scheme must be put up to the D.P.C for approval.
- (iii) The B.P.C. is empowered to approve Block-specific schemes with estimated costs not exceeding Rs. 50,000. Schemes involving more than Rs. 50,000 have to be put to the D.P.C. for approval.
- (iv) After drawing up its proposals for Block for the coming year these are forwarded to the D.P.C. for consideration and incorporation into the overall District Plan if they fulfill the guidelines previously set down.
- (v) The B.P.C is responsible for coordinating and regularly reviewing all schemes prepared by it; schemes run by the Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat; schemes jointly implemented by Panchayat, Departments or any other agency falling within the Block area.
- (vi) Schemes having command area covering more than one Block can be implemented only under the guidance of the D.P.C.
- (vii) The B.P.C. has to hold a meeting at least every two months and copies of the proceedings have to be endorsed by the D.P.C.

Appendix- III A

Brief History of the district Cooch Behar

Cooch Behar is the North-Eastern district of Jalpaiguri Division. In shape it is an irregular triangle. The name of Cooch Behar is rather of recent origin. In ancient times, the country was called Kamrup. Even during the reign of the last but one line of kings, the Khens, about 450 years ago, the country was known by that name. It came to be called Cooch Behar after the Koch kings had come into power in the beginning of the 16th century, long after all Buddhist influence had died out in Bengal. The name of Cooch Behar is a compound of two words : Cooch and Behar. The term "Cooch" is a corrupt form of Coch or Koch, being the name of race of people, inhabiting a large tract of country to the north-east of Bengal, and Behar or more properly vihara denotes abode or sport. "Cooch Behar" means the abode or the land of the Koches.¹

W. W. Hunter in his book "A statistical Account of Bengal" Volume X writes "The name 'Koch Behar' is derived from the Sanskrit Vihara (Bengali, Bihar) meaning 'recreation', especially applied to a Buddhist monastery. The latter is probably the historical basis of the name, as in the case of our province of Bihar. This name, however, is used only by the outside world. The appellation acceptable at the court of the Raja, who repudiates the theory of a Koch descent, is Nij Behar; the word Nij, 'own peculiar', being applied to distinguish the country from Bihar proper."²

Until January 1950, it used to be a feudatory state in political relations, first with the British government and then with the Government of India. On August 28, 1949 an agreement was contracted between the governor general of India and His Highness of Maharaja of Cooch Behar, which came to be known as the Cooch

Behar Marger Agreement in which His Highness the Maharaja of Cooch Behar Ceded to the Dominion government (Govt. of India) "full and exclusive authority, jurisdiction and powers for the in relation to the governance of the State", and agreed "to transfer the administration of the State to the Dominion Government on the 12th Day of September, 1949". It was stipulated that from the 12th September, 1949 the government of India would be competent to govern the State in such a manner and through such agency as it might think fit.

Between 12th September and 31st December 1949, Cooch Behar was known as a Chief Commissioner's Province in the government of India under a Chief Commissioner. After a series of talks between the union government, the West Bengal Government and the Government of Assam, in which the wished of the people of Cooch Behar was taken into account, the government of India reached a conclusion that the best interest of the people of Cooch Behar and of India as a whole would be served by the merger of Cooch Behar in the province of West Bengal. This was done with effect from January 1, 1950.³

Source:

1. A. Mitra District Hand books census 1951, Cooch Behar District West Bengal (Published G.S.N. Guha Roy).
2. W. W. Hanter A statistical Account of Bengal, Volume X, Statistical Account of Cooch Behar, London, 1876, P-332
3. Durgadas Majumdar West Bengal District Gazetteers, Cooch Behar, West Bengal, Gour Press, Cal-27, P-1.

Appendix- III B

Table showing Number of Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samity, Zilla Parishad in West Bengal.

District	Panchayat					
	Gram Panchayat	Number Panchayat Samity	Zilla Parishad	Number of seats Gram Panchayat	Number of seats Panchayat Samity	Number of seats Zilla Parishad
Year	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000	2000
Unit	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number	Number
(1)	(41)	(42)	(43)	(44)	(45)	(46)
Burdwan	277	31	1	4460	743	68
Birbhum	167	19	1	2334	422	35
Bankura	190	22	1	2742	496	42
Midnapore	514	54	1	7188	1295	108
Howrah	157	14	1	2576	433	34
Hooghly	210	18	1	3418	577	47
24-Parganas (N)	200	22	1	3233	549	50
24-Parganas (S)	312	29	1	4879	843	67
Kolkata	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nadia	187	17	1	3052	504	41
Murshidabad	255	26	1	4159	700	60
Uttar Dinajpur	99	9	1	1594	272	23
Dakshin Dinajpur	65	8	1	1009	178	15
Malda	147	15	1	2195	385	33
Jalpaiguri	148	13	1	2341	388	32
Darjeeling*	22	4	1	405	64	7
Cooch Behar	128	12	1	1879	339	27
Purulia	170	20	1	2140	391	34
West Bengal	3248	333	17	49604	8579	723

Source: Economic Review 2000-2001

Appendix- VA
Khagrabari Gram Panchayat
Income & Expenditure Account for the year 1999-2000

Income		Expenditure	
Particulars	Amount Rs.	Particulars	Amount Rs.
Opening balance	221680.00	Salary to Secretary	79243.00
Salary to G.P. Workers & Chowkidars	103580.00	Salary to Job Assistance	70750.00
Salary Secretary	79243.00	Commission for Tax collector	600.00
Salary to Job Assistance	70750.00	Contingency	98306.00
Other workers	720.00	Entertainment	16735.00
Honorarium to Pradhan & Upapradhan	39950.00	Convenor allowance	9800.00
Fixed allowance to members	18240.00	allowance to workers	3800.00
Convenor allowance	9800.00	allowance to members	9480.00
Old age pension scheme	175600.00	Honorarium to Pradhan & Upapradhan	39950.00
POPLAL	31400.00	Entertainment expenses	7147.00
Lalgi	50000.00	Expense for GP Workers	101580.00
Literacy	23184.00	Passenger shade	60136.00
Tax (House)	29743.00	Management Expenses to market	60556.00
Receipt from Market	54488.00	I.A.Y.	2806840.00
Registration Fee for House construction	18840.00	J.R.Y.	1490409.00
Fees for trade license	4796.00	Track terminus	358723.00
Sale of forms	983.00	J. R. Y.	85457.00
I.A.Y.	2852000.00	Construction of wall	99894.00
J.R.Y.	1643911.00	Drinking water project	135302.00
Misc.	3535.00	Old age pension scheme	179500.00
Cattle shade	3017.00	POPLAL	35900.00
Interest	5841.00	Lalgi	4500.00
Fish cultivation	5100.00	Literacy	25793.00
Leasing of ponds	2500.00	M.W.S.	31980.00
Nursery	11600.00	Employment assurance scheme	147040.00
Truck Terminus	339945.00	Library	106097.00
Construction of Walls	100000.00	Library	49996.00
Social Forestry	79082.00	Street light	91852.00
Drinking water scheme	241000.00	Sports competition	57668.00
Tupewell scheme	9392.00	Donation for Homeo	3614.00
Passenger shade	90000.00	Fish cultivation	37180.00
M.P. fund	50000.00	Charitable Homeo	17180.00
		Social Forestry	30152.00
		Payment for daily workers	1100.00
			11500.00
			4160.00
Total	6348765.02		6369920

Source: Annual Reports, Khagrabari Gram Panchayat for the years 1999-2000.

Appendix- VB
Sikarpur Gram Panchayat
Income & Expenditure Account for the year 1999-2000

Income		Expenditure	
Particulars	Amount Rs.	Particulars	Amount Rs.
Opening Balance	107641.85	Salary to Sectetary	85568.00
Salary to Sectetary	85568.00	Job Assistant	69066.00
Job Assistant	69066.00	G.P Workers	93746.00
G.P Workers	93746.00	Tax Collection (House)	40047.00
Tax Collection (House)	40047.00	Honariun to Pradhan & Upa Pradhan	36050.00
Honariun to Pradhan & Upa Pradhan	36050.00	T.A.	952.00
Members allowance	15280.00	Commission for Tax	1742.00
Allowance to Tax Collector	960.00	LALGI	10000.00
LALGI	10000.00	Allowance to Tax Collector	960.00
Rent from House	7650.00	J.R.Y	255289.00
Deposits	4000.00	J.G.J.S.Y	1734189.00
Khoar	2061.00	J.A.Y	3171360.00
Bank Interest	25940.00	Oldage allowance	163900.00
Sale of Tree	49905.00	Tube well for drinking water	24045.00
J.G.J.S.Y	1882431.00	J.R.Latrin	9890.00
I.A.Y	3301789.00	D.P.E.P.	23282.00
Oldage Allowence	122900.00	Construction for House of Primary School	12304.00
Literacy	2000.00	Deposits	2000.00
Sale of form	2700.00	Literacy	4496.00
Contingent	6388.00	Sales Tax	1814.00
Gram Panchayat Convener Club	7000.00	Chair & Table	7000.00
Tax From Market	15000.00	Ganasakti Paper	459.00
Agricultural Training	26000.00	Repairing for Tubewell	1807.00
Income from Ponds	10000.00	Electricity Bill	7532.00
Block Bhayer Sangeet	2101.00	Daily Works	5200.00
POPLAL	5000.00	Bamboo Bridge	15010.00
	1140.00	Chair Table	7000.00
		Office Cup	12738.00
		Guest Cup	4046.00
		Purchasing of Prawn	2829.00
		Construction of Building of a Club	15000.00
		Agricultural training	10818.00
		Prem chand Hat	20000.00
		Entertainment of Members	5943.00
		Allowance of Convener	13000.00
		Entertainment of Gram Sabha Meeting	3110.00
		Expense for Hat and building of primary school	29723.00
		Sports to Primary School	3480.00
		Telephone Bill	845.00
		Burnt house grant	700.00
		Repair to Sanitary	2000.00
		Bhawaya Sangeet	13480.00
		POPLAL	1140.00
		Misc.	8803.85
Total	5824722.00	Total	5932363.85

Source: Annual Reports, Sikarpur Gram Panchayat for the years 1999-2000.

Appendix- VI A
Performance under I. R. D. P. in West Bengal

Performance	1997-98	1998-99	1999-2000 (P) (S.G.S.Y)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1. Credit Disbured (Rs. in lakh)	7480.25	6480.70	7166.14
2. Subsidiary Disbured (Rs. in lakh)	3755.94	3141.78	3466.73
3 Physical Achievement (Number of families covered)	91733	71134	75981 (No. of Swarojgaries)

P= Provisional

Source : Department of panchayats
and Rural Development,
Government of west Bengal.

Note : I.R.D.P has been renamed as S.G.S.Y.
(Swarna Jyoti Gram Swarojgar Yojanas)
from 1999-2000.

Appendix- VI B

Performance under Wage Employment Schemes in West Bengal

Year	Stream	Expenditure (Rs.in lakh)	Physical Achievement (in lakh of mandays)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1997-98	JRY -1 st Stream	12409.99	154.62
	JRY- 3 rd Stream	412.63	6.79
	EAS	11411.40	139.44
Total		24234.02	300.85
1998-99	JRY -1 st Stream	12553.60	137.41
	JRY- 3 rd Stream	74.06	1.01
	EAS	10011.61	105.26
Total		22639.37	243.68
1999-2000	JGSY*	13074.47	113.86
	JRY- 3 rd Stream	48.32	0.65
	EAS	12626.39	127.70
Total		25749.18	242.21
1999-2000 (Upto November' 99)	JGSY*	4528.73	41.36
	JRY- 3 rd Stream	1.59	-
	EAS	6192.75	64.32
Total		10723.07	105.68
2000-2001 (Upto November' 2000)	JGSY*	9221.91	74.79
	JRY- 3 rd Stream	-	-
	EAS	6568.65	65.77
Total		15790.56	140.56

* From 1999-2000 JRY-1st Stream has been renamed as Jawahar Gram Sammriddhi Yojana.

Source: Department of Rural Development, Govt. of West Bengal.

Appendix-VI C
Questionnaire used for Survey on
Anti Poverty Programme Viz. IRDP & JRY

Annual Income (in Rs.)

0	-	4000
4001	-	6000
6001	-	8500
8501	-	11000

Village: _____ Village Code: _____ Block: _____

Name of Panchayat: _____ Gram Sabha: _____

1. (a) Name of Respondent: _____
 (b) Age: _____ (c) Caste: _____ (d) Sex: _____
 (e) Occupation: (Principal) : _____
 Subsidiary : _____
 (f) Education Qualification : _____

2. Details of the Members of the Household:-
 (a) No. of Members : _____ Male: _____ Female: _____

(b) Educational Qualification of the Member : _____

3. Whether Household owns a House : _____

4. Total size of the Land owned by the Household (Bigha).
 (a) Agricultural Land : _____

(b) Non-Agricultural Land : _____

5. (a) Whether the Household received benefit from IRDP Scheme: YES / NO

(b) if YES (i) Name of the Scheme : _____

(ii) Amount Sanctioned : _____

(iii) Actual cost of the Scheme : _____

(c) Reasons for preference, if any for the proposed activity/scheme.

(d) Is there any family background in respect of proposed activity/scheme.

6. (a) Whether this resulted in the improvement of the position of the household?

- (i) Increase in Production
- (ii) Increase in Income
- (iii) Increase in Savings

- (b) If yes state the increase in the Annual Income _____
(i) At the end of 1st year
(ii) At the end of 2nd year

(c) Name of the Institutional Financing Agency : _____

(d) State the income of the Household before received of the benefit of the IRDP.

- (A) Net farm Income _____
(B) Net non-farm Income _____
(C) Total Income _____

7. Does the beneficiary has any experience in Agricultural and allied activities, industry, service, trade etc.

8. (a) Whether his name was included in the beneficiary, list prepared by the Gram Sabha

(b) Whether the name of the beneficiary was walledup in the Panchayat Office.

(c) Did you face difficulties in obtaining loan – Yes/ No

(d) If Yes, what are the reasons:

- (i) Cumbersome process of getting loan.
(ii) Non-co-operation of the Bank Staff
(iii) Non-Co-operation of the Panchayat Member
(iv) Others

9. (a) Nature of the loan repayment : _____

(b) Has he repaid his loan either in full/ or in Part (In %) : _____

(c) If he is a defaulter, what are the reasons ?

- (a) Burden of family size.
(b) Expectation of exempting loan by the Govt. circular in future.
(c) Project failure.
(d) Extreme poverty.
(e) Inducement by the Panchayat not to repay.
(f) Contacts with lending Agency personnel.
(g) Any other reasons.

10. If the Household does not spend the money for the scheme state what he has done for other works?

COMMENTS:

PART- B
General View & other details related with J.R.Y. Workers.

11. (a) Whether the work done by Panchayat under J.R.Y. scheme is satisfactory/dissatisfactory?

(i) Reasons for satisfactory work.

(ii) Reasons for dissatisfactory work.

(b) Whether any permanent asset has been created in the village by which employment is generated ... Yes / No

(c) State the sectors of permanent employment creation.

(d) What is your view regarding the mandays creation?

(e) who are the receivers of the benefit of employment under J.R.Y. scheme?

A. Are they belong the any ruling political party?

B. Irrespective of any political party?

(f) Under what heads large expenditure of J.R.Y. has been made?

(g) Do you think expenditure has been channelled in proper head or not?

(h) How more mandays could have been under J.R.Y. according to you opinion?

COMMENTS:

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