

CHAPTER - 05

5.1. Facilitating Participatory Development: Role of Gram Sansad

Debate over “Participatory Development” started from the end of the cold war. Since the cold war’s end, donor countries have come to demand that development aid be more effectively and efficiently implemented and started to seek new aid strategies capable of garnering the support of their people and of replacing the strategy based on east-west ideological conflict. There is growing awareness that in order for aid to have visible effects, to protect human rights, and to promote democratization, donors must become actively involved in reforms of developing nations, political systems, policies and implementing structures. The period since the 1980s has seen a global trend toward political democratization and pluralism, economic liberalization and transitions to a market-oriented economy, although this has varied from country to country and region to region. In this light, increasing attention has come to be paid to the importance of broader people’s participation.

In December 1989, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)’s Development Assistance Committee (DAC) released a “policy statement on development cooperation in the 1990s”. It cited participatory development as the most important issue on the development aid agenda for the 1990s. Addressing the importance of participatory development, it states that stimulating productive energies of people, encouraging broader participation of all people in productive processes, and a more equitable sharing of their benefits, must become more central elements in development strategies and development.

Development within a developing society aims, we believe, at building into society the mechanisms that will ultimately permit self-reliant growth without foreign assistance, at sustaining stable growth patterns for economic development in harmony with the environment, and at providing equal and appropriate opportunities to take part in development to overcome income gaps, regional disparities and inequalities between men and women. For this to be possible, the central focus of development is not necessarily to boost production of materials goods; instead, it should be to foster and enhance people’s capability to have a role in their society’s development. To this end, people should be willingly involved in a wide range of development activities, as agents and beneficiaries of development. Participatory development is not an attempt to replace the top-down

development approach with a local community led approach. Participatory development attempts to introduce a bottom-up style of development in order to remedy the government-led approach's shortcoming, specifically by focusing on qualitative improvements in local society's participation.

The concept of representative democracy offers opportunity to the people to elect their representatives in whom they would want to vest the authority to govern. It is not always adequate. That is why the concept of participatory democracy gained prominence over the years. Its objective is to involve people directly in the process of decision making. The capacity of the people to contribute to development is immense and is also largely advantageous. Hence it seeks their participation in development and administrative programmes of which they are the beneficiaries, getting relevant information that is necessary for proper planning, mobilizing local resources and developing a new stratum of leadership. In India, the idea behind Panchayati Raj Institutions was to bring about such as participatory democracy through democratic decentralization.

The renewed emphasis on people's participation has now become quite conspicuous in development discourse. Besides stretching democratic governance for controlling representatives by enforcing accountability, from the development perspective participation is regarded as the essential imperative for the success of the development process itself. Participation of people is to increase the acceptance of the development programmes being undertaken, to reduce the administrative and operational cost of the programmes and ultimately to increase their efficacy.

Participation is being used in a number of contexts: self help, community mobilization, equitable distribution of development benefits, popular movement etc. From the developmental standpoint, it has at least three varieties: mass sharing of development benefits, mass contribution to the development effort and mass participation in decision making process of development planning.

In the development dialogue, participation encompasses people's involvement in the decision making process for determining societal goals, allocation of resources for archiving those and execution of the plan/programme so decided. Conceptually, participation urges increasing involvement, particularly of those who do not or cannot normally participate, assuming that given the supportive structure and opportunity they will become actively involved. Participation is viewed in terms of people's sharing of the benefits of development

programme, contribution to the programme itself and involvement in the decision making. Participation is the active association in the decision making as regards expressing priority, choosing among the alternatives, setting the social goal including the finance and resource and their allocation and active engagement in overseeing the accomplishment of the goal so set forth.

While democracy is the dominant political ideology, its local variant is crucial, as it is to be the stepping stone for the wider democratic system. Two broad indicators for measuring the depth of democracy are: extent of people's participation and responsible government acting according to and catering to the perception and priority of the people. However, participation of the people is the principal point without which responsive government will be illusory. If the level of people's participation is high and proactive, level of democratic governance will be exacting. Active involvement of the people in deliberation and decision making will help incorporate the inputs and ultimately clinch the interest of people. Designing the development programme, exercising approval function including budget, evaluating the ongoing scheme of work, undertaking the monitoring functions and forcing representatives to act according to people's preference and guidance all depend upon the extent of participation and active involvement of people.

Notwithstanding, we have preferred rather narrow conceptualization of participation, that is only people's attendance in the formal Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad meetings, their numerical presence without peeping into what they have expressed or emphasized regarding development priority and how far their preferences have been acted upon or whether these have at all been reflected in the Panchayat decisions and works. Evidently, mere figurative participation is not likely to disclose much, unless and until people's expressions, emphasis and more specifically the impact of those on Panchayat decisions are closely scrutinized.

In India the three tiers Panchayati Raj have been the institutional intervention to associate rural people in democratic and development process at village level. Especially, after Constitutionalisation of Panchayat by 73rd Amendment Act, provision for another forum either at the level of Gram Panchayat – the lower tier – or at each of its constituent wards or constituencies has been enacted for associating villagers at the grass-root level. Constitution and conferment of specific power and functions to Gram Sabha have offered rural population the scope and opportunity to collectively govern themselves according to their own perception and priority. Conceptually Gram Sabha empowers, engages villagers in the process of self-government, it is one face-to-face interactive collective decision making

forum for governing their own affairs. It is not only for enlistment of mass support but also their intimate involvement in the formulation, implementation of development plans. Besides, a few political offshoots such as raising self-identity, breaking down customs of inequality and discrimination, improving leadership skills can have impact on other aspects of life (1). Mass participation is supposed to have a few positive impacts on rural development efforts. One consequence is likely to be a newer dimension of development drives and governance. When almost all development decisions are made by the villagers, development will come closer to the felt needs, priorities and requirements of the people concerned. When people are enabled and enthused in the development process, it will produce stakeholders, who will in turn ensure formulation of development plan according to the felt needs of the people, with better maintenance of the community assets, the development therefore will conform to the people's priorities. People's participation is to help in selecting programmes that would conform to popular perception, identifying recipients who really deserve benefits of available government schemes, raising questions on the use of public funds and overseeing implementation of public projects will ensure better maintenance.

In the format of Gram Sabha, participatory democracy is now being emphasized where villagers are to assemble periodically to take stock of the activities, accounts of the Gram Panchyat undertaken social audit, administer accountability and put forth their perceived priorities in the sphere of rural development. It is to be a common forum, umbrella organization for interacting on issues concerning the community, for deciding common priority and set forth agenda for the common weal. Gram Sabha provides the political forum to people for enlisting aspiration of the community. Though the legislations across states have provided different functions and roles, Gram Sabha has generally been conceived as the primary body intended to facilitate direct participation of people in planning and development activities. Today Gram Sabha is to be the ultimate repository of power over elected representatives, development decisions and over bureaucracy. Gram Sabha is the forum where the civil engagement and formation of social capital will be possible. This experiment is extremely important as it has the potential to impact significant innovation in the system of governance and rural development. Precipitating a breakthrough in the dominant political orthodoxy, Gram Sabha makes a shift from representative democracy to People's democracy – on effort unparalleled both in the modern political institutions and among 60 countries that are currently experimenting with some sort of democratic decentralization (2). Gram Sabha as a forum confers to the people directly, without recourse to elected representative. Thus,

anomalies and vices of representative forms of governance are likely to be minimum. Representative bodies have their inherent dynamics of power politics and they usually end up vesting effective authority in the politician – bureaucratic nexus (3). One way to checkmate such nexus can be by involving more and more people in the structure of governance. Combining informal consensus making mechanism with the formal, institution forms, Gram Sabha has the potential to thwart the undemocratic and unresponsive governance. Gram Sabha both as a concept and method is more like a variation of direct democracy. As the attempt is of recent origin objective assessment of the power, working of Gram Sabha and its ambit and underpinnings are essential. The question is whether the concept has evolved effectively and whether it is capable of fulfilling all that is expected of it.

The 73rd Amendment Act entrusts preparation and implementation of plans for economic and social justice to Panchayat. Most conforming State Panchayat Acts have consequently envisioned Gram Sabha in terms of activating participatory process for preparation of rural development plan. Before the 1994 dispensation in West Bengal, Gram Sabha implied one assembly of electorate within the territorial jurisdiction of each Gram Panchayat. West Bengal is the first state to have bifurcated the participatory platform of Gram Sabha and another popular forum of villagers at each and every ward or constituency of Gram Panchayat, known as Gram Sansad has been ordained. In the West Bengal Panchayat Amendment Act, 1994, (4) a Gram Sabha has been defined as “a body consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls pertaining to a Gram” where a Gram is “any mouzas or parts thereof as and how the state government may notify. A Gram Panchayat will have jurisdiction over the territorial limits of such a Gram as notified by state government” (5). Gram Sabha meetings shall be held once every year during the month of December. One-twentieth of total members of a Gram Sabha shall form quorum. The resolutions of Gram Sansad and views of Gram Panchayats shall be placed before Gram Sabha for deliberation and recommendation. The questions and recommendations coming before Gram Sabha shall be recorded and referred to Gram Panchayat for its considerations. The annual budget, before being finally formulated by Gram Panchayat, must be approved by Gram Sabha. Other important issues like annual plan of Gram Panchayat and annual report of the activities of Gram Panchayat shall also be discussed in Gram Sabha.

A Gram Sansad has been defined by the West Bengal Panchayat amendment Act, 1994 as “a body consisting of persons registered at any time in the electoral rolls pertaining to a constituency of a Gram Panchayat delimited for the purpose of last presiding general

election to the Gram Panchayat”(6). For the convenience of election the state government divides the area of a “Gram” into constituencies on the basis of number of members of Gram Panchayat and allocates to each constituency seats not exceeding two. The electoral roll used in the State Legislative Assembly elections is used in determining persons who constitute the voters of a constituency. Every Gram Sansad shall have one annual and one half-yearly meeting in a year, annual meeting in the month of May and half-yearly meeting in the month of November. Extraordinary meeting also may be convened if the situation warrants or government so directs. The date and time of the meeting may be fixed by the Gram Panchayat. The Pradhan shall ordinarily preside over the meeting. The absences of Pradhan Upa-Pradhan of Gram Panchayat shall ordinary preside over the meeting, the elected representative of the concerned ward shall attain and in absence of Pradhan and Upa-Pradhan he/ she preside over the meeting. One tenth of the total members shall form quorum for Gram Sansad meeting.

A Gram Sansad shall “guide and advise the Gram Panchayat with regard to the schemes for economic development and social justice undertaken or proposed to be undertaken in its area.....”(7). It shall a) identify schemes which are required to be taken on priority basis for economic development of the village, b) identify beneficiaries of the programmes, c) mobilize mass participation for implementing the programme, d) constitute beneficiary committees comprising not more than nine persons who are not members of Gram Panchayat, for ensuring active participation of people in implementing schemes in the area, e) records its objection to any action of the Pradhan or any Gram Panchayat member for failure to implement any scheme properly or without participation of people of the area, f) promote solidarity and harmony among all settings of people. Apart from these the Gram Panchayat shall place for deliberation and suggestion, in the annual meetings of Gram Sansad, the budget of the Gram Panchyat and report on the work done during the previous year and work proposed to be done in the following year by the Gram Panchayat. It shall also place the latest report on audit and accounts of Gram Panchayat before the Gram Sansad during their half-yearly meetings. Apart from this, the members of Gram Sansad in the meetings can discuss any other business related to Gram Panchayat as may be agreed upon by persons present in such meetings. Thus formally the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad have been given enormous powers. Membership is open to every person irrespective of caste, religion, sex and occupation. The policies of Gram Panchayats are expected to reflect the wishes of the people expressed through Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha. Not only do such

bodies guide in policy making, they shall also act as watch-dog over Panchayats activities, criticize Panchayats for failure and help the Panchayat in implementation of programmes.

Day by day the eminence of Sansad is gradually increasing. Gram Panchayat has to duly consider every resolution of Sansad and any omission in this respect will be an act of impropriety and this may lead to even dissolution of the Gram Panchayat, so stipulated the amendment of 1997. The July 2003, Amendment of Panchayat Act has further fructified the supremacy of Sansad. Now Gram Panchayat shall not omit or refuse to act upon any recommendation of Sansad. Sansad has apparently been provided with its executive arm – Gram Unnayan Samity. Gram Unnayan Samity has become the planning unit in the sense that development plan of Gram Panchayat will be a compilation of Sansad plans. A Gram Sansad may constitute a Gram Unnayan Samity having jurisdiction over its area. Gram Unnayan Samity shall be responsible for ensuring active participation of people in implementation and equitable distribution of benefits of rural development programmes within its jurisdiction. It shall be accountable for its functions and decisions to the Gram Sansad. Gram Unnayan Samity may also constitute such number of functional committees as may be required. Department of Panchayat and Rural Development issued a handbook of Gram Unnayan Samity for all the Gram Panchayats of the state for the formation of the Samity. According to the Gram Unnayan Samity handbook, a special meeting of the Gram Sansad convened for the formation of the Gram Unnayan Samity and the quorum of the meeting fixed by 20% of the total voters of the concerned Sansad area. The Gram Unnayan Samity shall be formed consisting of two categories of people, i.e. reserved category and open category. Under reserved category, elected Gram Panchayat member of the concerned Sansad area, second person of the concerned area those who scored in second position in the last Panchayat election, members of the NGOs, three members from the self-help groups, one govt. employee, one teacher. The tenure of the Gram Unnayan Samity is to be equal to that of Gram Panchayat.

Theoretically these people forum-Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad is the best platform for decision making of the people. The participation in the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad is very important for the success of these people forum. But the real situation is far different. Neither authorities and nor the people give due significance to these forum. As a result officially they exists, functionally they lack teeth. Even if the Gram Sabha due to their large size remains ineffective Gram Sansad cannot afford to remain so. Meetings of the Gram Sabha between the years 1998 to 2002 were not held in each Sabha. Reports said that most of

the Gram Sabha meetings during 1998 to 2002 were not held. In 1998, only 562 Gram Sabha meetings held out of 3334 Gram Sabha, which is only 17%. In this year 200 Gram Sabha adjourned their meetings due to the lack of quorum which is 6% and 254 meetings of the Gram Sabha were not held which is 8%. In the year 1999, 1870 meetings were held out of the 3330 Gram Sabha, which is 56.5% and 133 meetings were adjourned which is 4% and 508 meetings were not held at any time which is 15.2%. In the year 2000, 1668 Gram Sabha meetings conducted out of 3360 Gram Sabha, which is 44%, 584 Gram Sabha meetings adjourned is 12% and 379 meetings were not held at any time which is 23%. In 2001, 2193 meetings of the Gram Sabha were held which is 65.3% out of the 3358 Gram Sabha and 1033 meetings of the Gram Sabha were adjourned due to the lack of quorum which is 30.76%. 153 meetings were not held at any time which is 5% of total Gram Sabha. In the year 2002, only 221 Gram Sabha meetings were held out of the 3358 which is only 6.6% and 107 meetings were adjourned which are 3.18% and 3022 meetings were not held at any time which is 90% of the total Gram Sansad.

Table 3: Report of the Gram Sabha Meetings of West Bengal During the Period of 1998 – 2002

Year	Number of Gram Sabha	Total number of meetings held	%	Number of Gram Sabha adjourned	%	Numbers of Gram Sabha where meetings did not held	%
1998	3334	562	17	200	6	254	8
1999	3330	1870	56.5	133	4	508	15.2
2000	3360	1668	44	584	12	379	23
2001	3358	2193	65.3	1033	30.76	153	5
2002	3358	221	6.6	107	3.18	3022	90

Source: Department of Panchayats and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

It is clear from the above table that the Gram Sabha meetings were not held in every year during the period of 1998 to 2002. Highest number of the Gram Sabha meetings were held in 2001, which is 2193, i.e. only 65.3%. It is interesting that highest number of Gram Sabha meetings were also adjourned in the same year, which is 1033 (30.76%). In the year 2002, the number of meetings were not held was the highest, i.e., 3022 (90%). The lowest numbers of meetings, only 221 (6.6%) meetings, were held in this year. The lowest number of meetings also adjourned in the same year which is 107 (3.18%). More than 50% meetings of the Gram Sabha were held only in the years 1999 (56.5%) and (65.3%) in 2001. So it is noted that the most important platform for the people participation and policy making is dying before her birth due to the lack of positive role of the authority. As a platform of direct

democracy for people, it has remained ineffective due to the lack of awareness of the Panchayat functionaries and also the general people. Gram Sabha as a significant decision making authority lost its significance in West Bengal due to lack of good will of the government authority and lack of awareness of the people. There is no availability of official data for research about the Gram Sabha, and so Gram Sabha is not popular among the people even today.

Table 4: Attendance Report of Gram Sabha Meetings of West Bengal During 2001 – 2002

Name of the Districts	Number of Gram Sabha	Average number of electorate / Gram Sabha	Year 2001		Year 2002	
			Total attendance with %	Women attendance with %	Total attendance with %	Women attendance with %
Coochbehar	128	9954	270 (3%)	56 (1%)	-----	250 (3%)
Jalpaiguri	146	10672	747 (7%)	-----	-----	-----
Darjeeling Hill area	112	3518	283 (8%)	-----	-----	-----
Siliguri Mahakuma	22	12664	633 (5%)	-----	-----	-----
Uttar Dinajpur	99	10604	349 (3%)	28 (1%)	-----	-----
Dakshin Dinajpur	65	10833	150 (1%)	-----	-----	-----
Malda	147	9707	419 (4%)	-----	395 (4%)	-----
Murshidabad	255	10122	819 (8%)	42 (1%)	-----	-----
Nadia	187	10442	639 (6%)	-----	639 (6%)	--
North 24 Paraganas	200	11078	446 (4%)	81 (1%)	-----	--
South 24 Paraganas	312	10197	248 (2%)	28 (1%)	-----	----
Howrah	157	11463	166 (1%)	31(1%)	-----	-----
Hooghly	210	11318	674 (6%)	97 (1%)	-----	-----
Purba Medinipur	224	-----	-----	-----	-----	---- --
Paschim Medinipur	290	9789	795 (8%)	208 (2%)	-----	---- --
Bankura	190	9203	288 (3%)	-----	-----	-----
Purulia	170	7515	-----	-----	450 (6%)	-----
Burdwan	277	11074	505 (5%)	31 (1%)	-----	-----
Birbhum	167	8826	618 (7%)	45 (1%)	-----	-----
Total	3358	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

Source: Department of Panchayats and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

The percentage of people present in the Gram Sabha meetings is very poor. According to the West Bengal Panchayat Amendment Act 1994, the quorum of the Gram Sabha meeting is one-twentieth of each of their total voters. Reports of the Gram Sabha meetings of West Bengal during the period of 2001-2002 showed that the percentage of the attendance in the meeting was very poor. Out of 18 districts of West Bengal Purba Medinipur did not supply report of the Gram Sabha meetings in 2001. Except Purba Medinipur all of the meetings of the Gram Sabha of 17 districts were held in the month of December as per record. Quorum of the meetings only crossed only in 8 districts out of 17 districts where meetings held. Three districts namely Darjeeling Hill area, Murshidabad and Paschim Medinipur recorded the highest attendance in percentage, which is only 8% of the average number of electors. In 2001, average 819 (8%) people were present in the Gram Sabha meetings but the average number of electorate is 10122. The second highest average people attendance in the Gram Sabha meetings is 795 (8%), from the Paschim Medinipur district in 2001. Paschim Medinipur had 290 Gram Sabha and average 9789 electorates in the year 2001. An average of 208 (2%) women attended in the Gram Sabha meetings in Paschim Medinipur in that year. But interestingly it is the highest attendance of women in Gram Sabha in 2001. Only ten districts out of 18 districts separately sent their women attendance data to the Government. After Paschim Medinipur, Hooghly recorded the second highest average women attendance in Gram Sabha meetings which is only 97 (1%). After Hooghly, North 24 Paraganas recorded average 81 (1%), Coochbehar recorded 56 (1%), Birbhum recorded 45 (1%), Burdwan and Howrah jointly recorded average 31(1%) women attendance, Murshidabad recorded 42 (1%), and Uttar Dinajpur and South 24 Paraganas jointly recorded 28 (1%) women attendance in the Gram Sabha meetings. Darjeeling Hill district ranked third for average people participation in Gram Sabha meetings which was recorded at 8%. Average attendance in the Gram Sabha meetings in Jalpaiguri district was 747 (7%) out of 146 Gram Sabhas where average number of electorates was 10672 per Gram Sabha in 2001. The average attendance in the Gram Sabha meetings in the district of Birbhum was only 618 (7%) per Gram Sabha in 2001. Hooghly had 210 Gram Sabhas and average number of electorates was 11318, where average attendance was 674 (6%). 639 (6%) people participated in the Gram Sabha meetings in the district of Nadia where there was an average of 10442 electorates per Gram Sabha in 2001. Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad marginally crossed the quorum number in 2001. Only average 633 (5%) people were participating in the meetings in 22 Gram Sabhas where 12664

electorates/Gram Sabha. Coochbehar, Uttar Dinajpur, Dakshin Dinajpur, Malda, North 24 Paraganas, south 24 Paraganas, Howrah, Bankura, Burdwan had not touched the quorum number. Out of these districts Dakshin Dinajpur and Howrah performed very poor performance in regard to people participation in the Gram Sabha meetings in 2001. These two districts recorded only 1% average attendance in the Gram Sabha meetings. Dakshin Dinajpur had 65 Gram Sabha and average number of electorates/Gram Sabha was 10833, but average attendance was only 150 (1%). The average attendance in the Gram Sabha in Howrah was only 166 (1%), South 24 Paraganas only 248 (2%), Bankura 288 (3%), Uttar Dinajpur 349 (3%), Malda 419 (4%), North 24 Paraganas 446 (4%) and Burdwan 505 (5%). Coochbehar had 128 Gram Sabha and average number of electorates per gram Sabha was 9954 in 2001. The average number of attendance in Gram Sabha was 270 (3%) of average attendance in 2001 which is very poor.

In 2002, available data was not found on the Gram Sabha meetings from all of the districts of West Bengal. Only Malda, Nadia, Purulia and Coochbehar districts supplied partial data of the Gram Sabha meetings of the year 2002. From these four districts Nadia and Purulia only achieved the quorum number. But Malda did not achieve quorum number. Coochbehar district supplied partial data of the Gram Sabha meetings in 2002. Coochbehar showed only the attendance data of the women in the Gram Sabha meetings which were only 250 (3%). Due to the lack of full data of the people attendance in Gram Sabha it is difficult to understand the real picture of the Gram Sabha. On the other hand Nadia recorded average number of electorate present in the Gram Sabha is 639 (6%). Purulia had 170 Gram Sabha and her average electorate was 7515 per Gram Sabha in 2002. An average of 450 (6%) people was present in the Gram Sabha meetings in Purulia in the year 2002. But it is interesting that the attendance data of the Gram Sabha meetings from the district of Purulia was not found in the year 2001. 395 (4%) people were present in the Gram Sabha meetings in Malda district in this same year, so this district did not achieve the quorum number as per Gram Sabha norms.

Table 5: Report of Annual Gram Sansad Meetings During the Year of 1997-2002

Year	Number of Gram Sansad	Average number of electorate/Gram Sansad	Total Numbers of meetings held	Average attendance	Total number of adjourned meetings	Meetings did not held
1997	36175	802	5613 (16%)	137 (17%)	-----	14196 (39%)
1998	44634	746	43346 (97%)	90 (12%)	-----	-----
1999	44634	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
2000	45167	783	17097 (38%)	93 (12%)	3654 (8.09%)	14612 (32.35%)
2001	45093	746	30023 (66.82%)	86 (12%)	4575 (10.15%)	15070 (33%)
2002	45094	746	43585 (97%)	86 (12%)	9417 (20.84%)	1509 (3%)

Source: Department of Panchyats and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

To investigate various dimensions of people's participation in Gram Sansad the researcher deeply analysed the information about Gram Sansad's annual meetings during the period of 1997 to 2002. It is clear from the above table that uneven data of Gram Sansad meetings were found from the respective office. Researcher collected the data and information from the office during the year 1997 to 2002. In 1997, 5613 (16%) Gram Sansad meetings were held out of the total 36175 Gram Sansad in West Bengal. 14196 (39%) meetings of the Gram Sansad were not held in the year 1997. No information was found about the annual meetings from the 16366 Gram Sansad which is more than 45% of the total Sansad. The average attendance in per Gram Sansad was 137 in 1997, which is only 17%. In 1998, out of a total of 44634 Gram Sansad 43346 meetings were held, which is 97% of the total Gram Sansad. No data and information were found about the adjournment of the Gram Sansad meetings and no data and information were found about the meetings which were not held at any time in the year 1998. Average attendance in the Gram Sansad meetings was only 90 which is 12%. The attendance data of Gram Sansad meetings was very poor in 1998. No data found about the annual meetings from the year 1999. In the year 2000, 17097 (38%) meetings of the Gram Sansad were held out of 45167 Gram Sansad. On that year 3654 (8.09%) meetings were adjourned and 14612 (32.35%) meetings were not held at any time. The average attendance in Gram Sansad meetings was 93 which is only 12% is also very poor. In 2001, 30023 meetings of the Gram Sansad were held which is 66.82% out of 45094 Gram Sansad. 4575 Gram Sansad meetings were adjourned in 2001 which is more than 10.15% and 15070 meetings of the Gram Sansad were not held which is 33%. The average

attendance in the Gram Sansad meetings was also very poor which only 86 (12%). In 2002, 43585 (97%) Gram Sansad meetings were held out of total 45094 Gram Sansad. 9417 Gram Sansad meetings were adjourned in the year 2002 which is 20.84% and 1509 Sansad meetings were not held which is 3%. The average attendance of the annual Gram Sansad meetings was 86 which is only 12%.

Comparatively the highest number of annual Gram Sansad meetings was held in 1998 and 2002. In 1998, 43346 meetings were held which is 97% and 43585 meetings were also held in the year 2002 which is also 97%. The lowest numbers of Gram Sansad meetings were held in the year 1997, which is 5613 (16%). But comparatively highest average people participated in the annual Gram Sansad meetings in the year 1997 which is 137 (17%). This participation is also very poor from researcher knowledge for the success of the participatory development. Lowest people participation in the annual Gram Sansad meetings was recorded from the years 2001 and 2002. The average attendance in the Gram Sansad meetings was only 86 (12%). The highest number of meetings adjourned was in 2002 which is 9417 (20.84%). The highest number of annual meetings was not held in the year 1997 which is 14196 (39%).

Table 6: Report of Half-Yearly Gram Sansad Meetings During the Year of 1997-2004

Year	Number of Gram Sansad	Average number of electorate/Gram Sansad	Total Numbers of meetings held	Average attendance	Total number of adjourned meetings	Meetings did not held
1997	36185	808	32101 (88.71%)	145 (18%)	-----	4084 (11%)
1998	36175	802	31921 (88%)	142 (18%)	-----	4262 (11.78%)
1999	44634	747	43544 (97.5%)	94 (13%)	-----	1099 (2.5%)
2000	45167	750	42829 (95%)	79 (10.53%)	11056 (24.48%)	2338 (5%)
2001	45167	750	43105 (95.43%)	79 (10.53%)	11051 (24.47%)	2062 (5%)
2002	45094	753	32407 (71.9%)	84 (11.16%)	7648 (16.97%)	12687 (28%)

Source: Dept. of Panchyats and Rural Development, Govt. of West Bengal

To investigate various dimensions of the people's participation in the Gram Sansad meetings researcher analysed the data and information of the half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings during the period of 1997 to 2002. The highest number of half-yearly meetings held

in the year 2001 during this period. In 2001, 43105 half-yearly meetings were held out of 45167 Gram Sansad which is 95%. In the same year 11051 meetings were adjourned due to the lack of quorum which is 24.47%. 2062 half-yearly meetings were not held on that year which is 5%. The highest number of half-yearly meetings adjourned in the year 2000. The number of the adjourned meetings was 11056 (24.48%). The highest number of meetings not held in the year 2002 during this period is 12687 (28%). The highest number of people participated in half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings in the year 1997 which is 145 (18%). In 1998; 142 (18%) people participated in average in the meetings, in 1999 this participation were 94 (13%), in 2000 this participation were 79 (10.53%), in 2001 this was the same as the previous year in 2000, and in 2002, 84 (11.16%) people participated in Gram Sansad meetings.

Comparatively the record of the half-yearly meetings is better than the annual meetings during this period. The highest number of half-yearly meetings was held in 1999 which is 43544 (97.5%) whereas 43585 (97%) annual meetings were held in 2002. The lowest number of annual meetings, which is 5613 (16%), was held in the year 1997 during this period whereas lowest number of half-yearly meetings, 32407 (71.9%), were held in the year 2002. The highest number of half-yearly meetings, 11056 (24.48%), were held in the year 2000 during this period whereas highest number of annual meetings adjourned, 9417 (20.84%), from the year 2002. The lowest number of annual meetings adjourned 3654 (8.09%), from the year 2000 whereas lowest number of half-yearly meetings adjourned, 7648 (16.97%), from the year 2002. Lowest numbers of annual meetings were held compaire to half-yearly meetings. The highest number of annual meetings was not held 15070 (33%), in the year 2001 whereas highest number of half-yearly meetings was not held, 12687 (28%), in 2002 during this period. The lowest number of meetings did not held in half-yearly meetings in 1999 which were 1099 (2.5%). More people participated in the half-yearly meetings than in the annual meetings during this period. 145 (18%) people participated in the half-yearly meetings which is the highest attendance in Gram Sansad meetings from the year 1997 whereas lowest numbers of people also participated in the half-yearly meetings which is 79 (10.53%) from the years 2000 and 2001.

Table 7: Attendance Report of Annual Gram Sansad Meetings of West Bengal During the Year 2001 – 2002

Name of the Districts	Number of Gram Sansad	Average number of electorate/ Gram Sansad	Year 2001		Year 2002	
			Average number of attendance with %	Average number of women attendance with %	Average number of attendance with %	Average number of women attendance with %
Coochbehar	1701	749	127 (17%)	16 (2%)	124 (17%)	25 (3%)
Jalpaiguri	2095	744	134 (18%)	15 (2%)	134 (18%)	15 (2%)
Darjeeling Hill area	1041	382	-----	11 (3%)	46 (12%)	11 (3%)
Siliguri Mahakuma	348	764	-----	-----	84 (11%)	-----
Uttar Dinajpur	1470	740	67 (9%)	12 (2%)	70 (9.5%)	10 (1%)
Dakshin Dinajpur	925	746	-----	-----	52 (7%)	10 (1%)
Malda	2021	738	63 (8.5%)	10 (1%)	63 (8.5%)	10 (1%)
Murshidabad	3614	784	144 (18%)	-----	144 (18%)	-----
Nadia	2639	704	75 (11%)	19 (3%)	83 (10%)	15 (2%)
North 24 Paraganas	2923	769	-----	-----	78 (10%)	14 (2%)
South 24 Paraganas	4324	769	62 (8%)	12 (2%)	62 (8%)	12 (2%)
Howrah	2218	803	-----	-----	52 (6.5%)	10 (1%)
Hooghly	3001	801	91 (11%)	17 (2%)	91 (11%)	17 (2%)
Purba Medinipur	2970	804	-----	-----	95 (12%)	25 (2%)
Paschim Medinipur	3449	787	87 (11%)	17 (2%)	89 (11%)	18 (2%)
Bankura	2488	750	65 (8.7%)	9 (1%)	65 (8.7%)	9 (1%)
Purulia	1925	766	79 (11%)	7 (1%)	79 (11%)	7 (1%)
Burdwan	3833	817	97 (12%)	27 (3%)	97 (12%)	27 (3%)
Birbhum	2108	745	-----	-----	60 (8%)	8 (1%)
Total	45093					

Source: Department of Panchayats and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

To investigate various dimensions of people's participation in Gram Sansad researcher analysed the data of the annual Gram Sansad meetings which were held during the period of 2001 to 2002. This analysis deeply studied the people's participation in Sansad meetings which is very important for the success of participatory democracy. This study also separately

analysed the women's participation which is also very important for the success of the participatory development. For this the above table showed the participation data of the annual Gram Sansad meetings. Researcher had taken the participation data of the annual meetings as a sample study during the period 2001 to 2002. But researcher did not find full attendance data about the participation from all districts of West Bengal. Researcher found comparatively more data about people participation from the year 2002 than from 2001. Researcher found attendance data of 12 districts out of 18 districts (Darjeeling Hill & Siliguri Mahakam presented their data separately) in 2001 whereas attendance data was found from all of the districts in 2002. In 2001 the highest average attendance in annual meetings was 134 which are 18% from the district of Jalpaiguri. Coochbehar recorded second position for people participation in the annual Sansad meetings. The average attendance in the annual meetings was 127 which are 17% in Coochbehar district in 2001. The lowest number of people participated in Gram Sansad meetings from South 24 Paraganas in 2001 which were only 62 (8%). The highest number of women participated in annual Gram Sansad meetings from the Burdwan district in 2001. The average 27 (3%) women were attendant in the Annual Gram Sansad meetings in 2001 in Burdwan district. The lowest number of women participated from the Purulia district in 2001. The attendance of women from Purulia were only 7 (1%) in 2001 in annual Gram Sansad meetings. This participation is very poor for the participatory development. In 2002, the highest number of people participated in annual Gram Sansad meetings from Murshidabad district. Average 144 people participated in annual Gram Sansad meetings in Murshidabad which is 18%. Jalpaiguri district recorded average participation of 134 which is also 18% followed by Murshidabad. Coochbehar recorded third position for people participation in annual Gram Sansad meetings in 2002. An average of 124 people participated in the annual Gram Sansad meetings in Coochbehar District which is 17%. The lowest average attendance in annual Gram Sansad meetings was 52, is 6.5% in 2002 from Howrah district. More or less average women attendance data of annual Gram Sansad meetings are found from 17 districts except only Murshidabad and Siliguri Mahakuma a part of Darjeeling district in 2002. The highest number of women attendance recorded from the district of Burdwan. Average 27 women were participated in annual Gram Sansad meetings which are only 3% from the Burdwan district in 2002. Coochbehar and Purba Medinipur recorded jointly second in position for women participation in annual Gram Sansad meetings in 2002. The average women attendance in annual Gram Sansad meetings in Coochbehar and Purba Medinipur was 25 (3%). The lowest average women attendance was

recorded from the Purulia district. An average of 7 (1%) women participated in the annual Gram Sansad meetings in Purulia district in 2002.

Comparatively, participation in annual meetings of 2002 is better than the annual meetings of 2001. But interestingly highest number of people participated in annual meetings jointly from the year 2001 and 2002 from same district, Murshidabad. An average of 144 people participated in annual meetings in Murshidabad district which is 18%. The lowest number of people participated in the annual meetings from Howrah district in 2002. Only an average of 52 people participated in the annual Sansad meetings, which is only 6.5%. Interestingly highest number of women participated in the annual meetings in the years 2001 and 2002 from the same district Burdwan. An average of 27 women participated in annual meetings in Burdwan district which is 3%. Lowest women attendance was also recorded jointly from the district of Purulia in 2001 and 2002. Only an average of 7 women participated in the annual meetings, which is only 3%. It is noted from above discussion that the attendance in Gram Sansad meetings is very poor. This type of poor attendance does not boost the participatory development. Participation is the basic criteria for the success of participatory development. Without mass participation participatory democracy will not reach her goal. But interestingly till today people participation in the Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha is very poor. There are so many causes for non-participation in participatory development. Researcher thinks the most important cause is lack of awareness among the people about the importance of Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad. Government unwillingness is another cause for the low attendance in the people's forum.

Table 08: Attendance Report of Half-Yearly Gram Sansad Meetings of West Bengal During the Year of 2001 – 2002

Name of the Districts	Number of Gram Sansad	Average number of electorate/ Gram Sansad	Year 2001		Year 2002	
			Average number of attendance with %	Average number of women attendance with %	Average number of attendance with %	Average number of women attendance with %
Coochbehar	1701	749	97 (13%)	9 (1%)	143 (19%)	17 (2%)
Jalpaiguri	2095	744	134 (18%)	15 (2%)	141 (19%)	18 (2%)
Darjeeling Hill area	1041	382	50 (13%)	27 (7%)	49 (12.7%)	3 (1%)
Siliguri Mahakuma	349	823	99 (12%)	33 (4%)	99 (12%)	16 (2%)
Uttar Dinajpur	1470	740	68 (9%)	15 (2%)	75 (10%)	13 (2%)
Dakshin Dinajpur	925	741	83 (11%)	14 (2%)	63 (8.5%)	14 (2%)
Malda	2021	738	78 (11%)	13 (2%)	68 (9%)	6 (1%)
Murshidabad	3614	784	142 (18%)	-----	47 (6%)	-----
Nadia	2639	809	86 (11%)	16 (2%)	79 (9.77%)	14 (2%)
North 24 Paraganas	2923	763	77 (10%)	13 (2%)	55 (7.2%)	17 (2%)
South 24 Paraganas	4324	765	58 (8%)	8 (1%)	94 (12.3%)	13 (2%)
Howrah	2218	803	53 (7%)	11 (1%)	46 (5.73%)	9 (1%)
Hooghly	3001	801	82 (10%)	16 (2%)	91 (11.4%)	16 (2%)
Purba Medinipur	2970	804	67 (9%)	18 (2%)	97 (12%)	30 (4%)
Paschim Medinipur	3449	787	86 (11%)	27 (3%)	140 (17.8%)	20 (3%)
Bankura	2488	750	63 (8%)	9 (1%)	30 (4%)	7 (1%)
Purulia	1925	766	89 (11%)	8 (1%)	84 (11%)	7 (1%)
Burdwan	3833	817	93 (11%)	24 (3%)	92 (11.3%)	17 (2%)
Birbhum	2108	745	66 (9%)	10 (1%)	-----	-----
Total	45093					

Source: Department of Panchayats and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

To analyse the people's participation in Gram Sansad meetings researcher investigates the data of half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings during the period of 2001 to 2002. This table showed the average attendance in the half-yearly meetings. The attendance in half-yearly

meetings was average in 2001 and 2002. In 2001, the highest number of people participated in the half-yearly meetings in Murshidabad district. The average attendance in half-yearly meetings in Murshidabad district was 148, which is 18%. 134 people participated in the half-yearly meetings in Jalpaiguri district; this is also 18%. Lowest number of people participated in the half-yearly meetings in South 24 Paraganas in 2001. Only an average of 58 people participated in the half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings in 2001, which is only 8%. 8% people also participated in Bankura district but the average number of people was 63. The highest number of women participated in half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings in Darjeeling Hill district in 2001. An average of 27 women participated in the meetings, which is only 7%. The lowest number of women participated in the half-yearly meetings jointly in Purulia and South 24 Paragana districts. In Purulia and South 24 Paraganas only an average of 8 women participated in the meeting which is only 1%. An average of 9 women participated in the half-yearly meetings in Coochbehar district which is also 1%. In the year 2002, highest number of people participated in the half-yearly meetings in the Coochbehar district. An average of 143 people participated in the half-yearly meetings in the Coochbehar district in 2002, which is 19%. An average of 141 people participated in the half-yearly meetings in Jalpaiguri district, which is also 19%. The lowest number of people participated in the half-yearly meeting in Bankura district in 2002. The average attendance was in the meetings was only 30, which is only 4%. The attendance data of the half-yearly meetings of the Birbhum district was not found. The highest number of women participated in the half-yearly meetings in Purba Medinipur district. 30 women participated in the half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings in Purba Medinipur in 2002, which is only 4%. The lowest number of women participated in the half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings in Darjeeling Hill district in 2002. An average 3 women participated in the meetings which is only 1%. Malda, Bankura, Howrah and Purulia also recorded 1% women attendance in half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings in 2002.

The performance of the half-yearly Sansad meetings is slightly better in comparison to the annual meetings. Attendance of the people in half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings is slightly better than the annual meetings during this period. Comparatively the highest number of people participated in the Coochbehar district in 2002. The average attendance in the Gram Sansad meetings was 143 (19%), which was more than from the district of Murshidabad by only 1 person; in Murshidabad district 142 (18%) people participated in 2001. The lowest average number of people participating in the half-yearly meetings was in the Bankura district; this was 30(4%) in 2002. Highest average women attendance was recorded from the

district of Darjeeling Hill in 2001 whereas lowest average attendance was recorded from the same district in 2002, which is only 3 (1%). It is clear from the discussion that the attendance in Gram Sansad meetings is very poor. All records of the participation in the Gram Sansad meetings showed that the participation is very poor. The people participation in the half-yearly and annual Gram Sansad meetings more or less the same and trend of the participation does not inspire confidence for the success of participatory development. Actually awareness about the Sansad and Sabha among the people is very poor, and so people are not interested to attend this forum. On the other hand those who are present at the meetings are mostly supporters of the ruling parties, and so most of the discussion relates to party matters. So the people who are not supports of the ruling parties are not interested to attend the meetings. Women are less aware and less interested in these forums because women are engaged most of their time in household works. It is also noted that women are more illiterate than men so they are not interested to attend this platform for people participation. But without participation of all sections of the people the benefits of the participatory development will not reach to the hands of people.

Table 9: Report of Gram Sabha Meetings of Coochbehar During the Period of 1999 to 2002

Year	Number of Gram Sabha	Average number of electorates per Gram Sabha	Total number of meetings held with %	Total number of meetings adjourned with %	Total number of meetings did not held with %	Average number of attendance in each Gram Sabha meetings with %	Average women attendance with %
1999	128	9954	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
2000	128	9954	105 (82%)	-----	23 (18%)	-----	-----
2001	128	9954	122 (95%)	13 (10%)	06 (5%)	270 (3%)	56 (1%)
2002	128	9954	08 (6.25%)	04 (3%)	120 (94%)	-----	250 (3%)

Source: Department of Panchayats and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

To investigate various dimension of people participation in Gram Sabha researcher analysed the data of Gram Sabha of Coochbehar district during the period of 1999 to 2002. Coochbehar has 128 Gram Sabhas. The full information about the Gram Sabha meetings of 1999 was not found. In 2000, 105 Gram Sabha meetings were held out of 128 Gram Sabhas,

which is 82%. No meetings were adjourned in that year but 23 meetings were not held in 2000, which is 18%. The attendance data of the year 2000 was not found. In 2001, 122 meetings were held, which is 95% of total Gram Sabha. 13 meetings were adjourned in that year due to lack of quorum, which is 10%, and 6 meetings were not held in 2001, which is 5%. The average attendance in Gram Sabha meetings was 270 (3%) out of an average of 9954 electorates per Gram Sabha. Average women attendance in Gram Sabha meetings in 2001 was only 56, which is only 1%. In 2002, only 8 meetings were held according to the report, which is only 6.25% of total Gram Sabha meetings. 4 meetings were adjourned, which is 3%, and 120 meetings were not held in 2002, which is 94%. Average attendance in the Gram Sabha was not found; only average women attendance was found, which 250 is (3%) only.

It is clear from the above analysis that the highest number of Gram Sabha meetings was held in the year 2001. 122 meetings were held in 2001, which is 95%. The lowest number of meetings was held in the year 2002. In 2002, only 8 meetings were held, which is only 6.25%. Obviously the highest number of meeting was not held was in 2002, which are 120 (94%). The lowest number of meetings was not held in 2001, which are only 6 (5%). The average attendance was only found from the year 2001, which are 270 (3%). The highest women attendance was recorded from the year 2002, which are 250 (3%). The lowest women participation was recorded from the year 2001, which are 56 (1%). So this report suggested that the performance of the Gram Sabha meetings does not offer any ray of hope. So researcher thinks it is not good for real participatory development. Researcher thinks it is the negligence of the authorities to making the masses aware of the importance of their participation in Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad. Except lack of awareness about people participation there are so many causes which are responsible for the failure of the participatory development.

Table 10: Report of Annual Gram Sansad Meetings of Coochbehar During the Year 1998-2002

Year	Number of Gram Sansad	Average number of electorate /Gram Sansad	Total Numbers of meetings held with %	Average attendance with %	Average number of women attendance With %	Total number of adjourned meetings with %	Meetings did not held with %
1998	1701	749	1469 (86.36)	-----	-----	-----	-----
1999	1701	749	1701 (100%)	97 (13%)	-----	-----	-----
2000	1701	749	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
2001	1701	749	940 (55%)	127 (17%)	16 (2%)	23 (1.35%)	761 (45%)
2002	1701	749	1396 (82%)	124 (17%)	25 (3%)	36 (2.11%)	305 (18%)

Source: Department of Panchyats and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

To investigate various dimensions of people participation in Gram Sansad meetings in Coochbehar district researcher made a comparative analysis among the data of annual meetings during the period of 1998 to 2002. This study also analysed the meetings held and related matters. Coochbehar had 1701 Gram Sansad during this period and average number of electorate was 749 during this period. No data was found from the annual meetings of 1998. In 1999, 100% annual Gram Sansad meetings were held in 1701 Gram Sansad areas. The average attendance in the annual meetings of 1999 was 97, which are only 13%. Average women attendance data was not found from the year 1999. No data related to the annual Gram Sansad meetings of Coochbehar district was found for the year 2000. In 2001, 940 meetings were held which is 55%. Total 23 meetings were adjourned in 2001, which is 1.35% and 761 annual meetings were not held, which is 45%. The average attendance in annual Gram Sansad meetings was 127, which is 17% and women participation was 16, which is only 2%. In 2002, 1396 meetings were held out of 1701 which is 82%, 36 meetings were adjourned, which is 2.11% and 305 meetings were not held, which is 18%. The average attendance in annual meetings was 124, which is 17%, and 25 women participated in the annual meetings in 2002, which is only 3%.

It is clear from the above discussion that the highest number of annual meetings was held in the year 1999, which is 100% during this period. The highest of 36 meetings was adjourned in the year 2002, is only 2.11%. The highest of 761 meetings was not held in 2001, which is 45%. The highest average attendance in the annual meetings was 127 (17%) from the year 2001. The highest number of women attending annual meetings in 2002 was only 25 (3%). The lowest numbers of meetings were held in 2001, which is 940 (55%). The lowest

number of people attending annual meetings was in 1999, which is 97 (13%). Without full data about the Gram Sansad meetings it is very difficult to study the nature, dimension and people participation in the Gram Sansad meetings. Researcher thinks there is lack of interest and awareness among the governmental officials about the importance of the Gram Sansad meetings, and so they are have not preserved data related to the meetings properly.

Table 11: Report of Half-Yearly Gram Sansad Meetings of Coochbehar During the Year of 1998-2002

Year	Number of Gram Sansad	Average number of electorate/ Gram Sansad	Total Numbers of meetings held with %	Average attendance with %	Average number of women attendance With %	Total number of adjourned meetings with %	Meetings did not held with %
1998	1701	749	1701 (100%)	90 (12%)	-----	nil	nil
1999	1701	749	1690 (99%)	135 (18%)	-----	-----	11 (1%)
2000	1701	749	1327 (78%)	97 (13%)	9 (1%)	39 (2.29%)	374 (22%)
2001	1701	749	1327 (78%)	97 (13%)	9 (1%)	39 (2.29%)	374 (22%)
2002	1701	749	990 (58%)	143 (19%)	17 (2%)	10 (1%)	711 (42%)

Source: Department of Panchyats and Rural Development, Government of West Bengal

To investigate various dimensions of people's participation in Gram Sansad researcher analysed the data about the half-yearly meetings of the Gram Sansad during the period of 1998 to 2002 of Coochbehar district. In 1998, 1701 meetings of the Gram Sansad were held, which is 100%, and average attendance in these meetings was 90, which is only 12%. In 1999, 1690 Gram Sansad meetings were held out of 1701 Sansads, which is 99% and 11 (1%) meetings were not hold. The average attendance in these meetings was 135, which is 18%. In 2000, 1327 (78%) meetings were held out of 1701 Gram Sansads, 39 meetings were adjourned which is (2.29%) and 374 meetings were not held, which is 22%. The average attendance in the half-yearly meetings was 97, which is 13% and an average of 9 women was present in the meetings, which is only 1%. In 2001, the same number of meetings was held and adjourned, and the numbers of meetings were not held was the same as in 2000. The same number of people also attended in the Gram Sansad meetings. In 2002, 990 (58.2%) meetings were held, 10 (1%) meetings were adjourned and 721 (42%) meetings were not

held. The average attendance in the half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings was 143 (19.1%) and average women attendance was 17 (2%) per Gram Sansad.

It is clear from the above discussion that the highest number of meetings was held in the year 1998, which is 100%. The highest number of meetings adjourned in the years 2001 and 2002 and the highest number of meetings not held in the year 2002, which is 42%. The highest number of people attending meetings in 2002, which is 143 (19.1%) and highest number of women also attending meetings was also in 2002, which is 17 (2%).

It is noted from the comparative study between half-yearly and annual meetings of the Gram Sansad that more half-yearly meetings were held than annual meetings. Comparatively the performance of the half-yearly meetings is better than the annual meetings. One thing is very interesting that the highest numbers of meetings were held in 1998 at the time of half-yearly meeting and also highest numbers of meetings were held in the time of annual meeting in 1999. It is clear from the above discussion that more annual meetings were adjourned than half-yearly meetings. The lowest number of meetings was held at the time of annual meetings rather than at the time of half-yearly meetings. Higher attendance was recorded from the half-yearly meetings than from annual meetings. The lowest average attendance was recorded jointly from the half-yearly and yearly meetings. The highest women attendance was recorded from the annual meetings comparatively from the half-yearly meetings. One trend noted from above discussion is that the performance of half-yearly meetings has always been better than of the annual meetings. Attendance record is always better from half-yearly meetings than annual meetings.

5.2 Field Experience

To investigate various dimensions of people participation in Gram Sansad meetings, researcher sampled two Gram Panchayats namely Rampur – I from Tufanganj Block – II of Coochbehar district, situated very far from district headquarters. The distance of the Gram Panchayat from district headquarters is more than 70 kilometers. The other Gram Panchayat is Khagrabari Gram Panchayat; it is very close to the district headquarters under the Coochbehar Block – II. The boundary of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat started from the end of Coochbehar municipality. Selection of the Gram Panchayats is purposive because Rampur – I is very far from the district head quarter and very remotest area of the district. Rampur – I is situated very close to the State of Assam on one side, with Alipurduar district making the

north boundary of the Rampur – I Gram Panchayat. It is impossible to reach this place by road only through Coochbehar. Even today people reach there from any other part of the state through Alipurduar district. So researcher thinks the data and information about Gram Sansad given from the Gram Panchayat will provide an exact understanding about the Gram Sansad. Researcher thinks Khagrabari Gram Panchayat will give another type of information and data about the Gram Sansad. Researcher peeped into the people's attendance in the Gram Sansad meetings of all the constituencies/wards of the two Gram Panchayats during the year 2003 – 2006.

5.2.1 Experience from Gram Sansad of Rampur – I Gram Panchayat

Rampur – I Gram Panchayat is under Tufanganj Block – II of Coochbehar district. The total area of the Gram Panchayat is 6751 acres; out of this area 832.45 acres is Bastu land. The State of Assam made the east boundary of the Gram Panchayat. The west boundary of this Gram Panchayat framed by the Kamakhyaguri – I and Kamakhyaguri – II Gram Panchayat under Kumargramduar block of Alipurduar district. The north boundary is made by the Bhalka-Barobisha Gram Panchayat – I and Gram Panchayat - II of Kumargramduar block of Alipurduar district. Only the south boundary is made by the Rampur – II of the Tufanganj block – II of Coochbehar district. Geographically two sides of the GP bounded by the newly created Alipurduar district from Jalpaiguri district and one side bounded by the State of Assam and only one side bounded by the Coochbehar district. The major rivers of the districts are Sankosh, Raidhak – II and Jorai. The total population of the Rampur – I GP is 18050. Out of the total population 9060 are male and 8990 are female. 10834 people belong to the SC category out of the total population. So it is right to say that the GP area is Scheduled Caste dominated area. There is one Higher Secondary School, one Junior High School, one MSK, 14 Primary Schools and 4 Shisu Shikhsa Kendra for the purpose of ensuring education for the people of this GP and adjoining areas. There is one Primary Health Centre, 3 Sub Health Centres in the GP area for the purpose of the health security. One bank (Gramin Bank), one registered Rural Library, two Post Offices, one Railway Station, two Police Camps, two Markets, one Children Park, one Veterinary Hospital are in the Gram Panchayat area for the benefits of the GP and adjoining area.

To investigate the role of Gram Sansad for facilitating participatory development, researcher studied the people's participation in the Gram Sansad meetings in the Rampur – I GP. This GP has 11 Gram Sansads and 14 elected Gram Panchayat members. Out of the total

member 9 are male and 5 are female. Researcher personally attended in all of the 11 Gram Sansads at the time of Sansad meetings for observation. Researcher also collected official data and documents related to the Gram Sansad for his observation and verification. Researcher also communicated personally with the voters of the respecting Sansad area for better result. Researcher also conducted conversation with the Pradhan and Upa-Pradhan and members of the Gram Panchayat and also Panchayat official from the year 2002 to the present for good result.

Table 12: Attendance Report of Half-Yearly Gram Sansad Meetings of Rampur – I Gram Panchayat During the Year of 2003 – 2006

Sansad No.	Total Voters	Year 2003 - 04		Year 2004 - 05		Year 2005 - 06	
		Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %	Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %	Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %
82	1161	143 (12.31%)	53 (37%)	223 (19.21%)	42 (18.83%)	233 (20%)	66 (28.33%)
87	550	106 (19.27%)	22 (20.75%)	205 (37.27%)	80 (39%)	112 (20.36%)	55 (49%)
88	1023	181 (17.69%)	86 (47.51%)	159 (15.54%)	43 (27%)	149 (14.57%)	75 (50.34%)
89	1194	59 (5.13%)	22 (37.29%)	236 (19.77%)	101 (42.8%)	235 (19.68%)	85 (37.17%)
		133 (11.14%)	55 (41.35%)				
90	504	74 (14.68%)	10 (13.51%)	67 (13.29%)	21 (31.34%)	95 (18.85%)	26 (27.37%)
91	635	110 (17.32%)	28 (25.45%)	112 (17.64%)	62 (53.36%)	90 (14.17%)	26 (28.89%)
92	1093	118 (10.80%)	17 (14.41%)	168 (15.37%)	58 (34.52%)	187 (17.11%)	86 (45.99%)
93	1043	116 (11.12%)	39 (33.62%)	122 (11.7%)	50 (40.98%)	122 (11.7%)	56 (45.9%)
94	1089	191 (17.54%)	48 (25.13%)	206 (18.92%)	79 (38.35%)	141 (12.95%)	58 (41.13%)
95	962	208 (21.62%)	20 (9.62%)	270 (28%)	25 (9.26%)	168 (17.64%)	73 (43.45%)
96	715	108 (15.10%)	12 (11.11%)	137 (19.16%)	56 (40.88%)	147 (20.56%)	66 (44.9%)

Source: Rampur – I Gram Panchayat Office

To investigate various dimensions of people's participation in Gram Sansad meetings researcher presented and analysed the data of people participation in the half-yearly meetings of 11 Gram Sansad areas during the period of 2003-2006. In 2003-04, 143 people were present in the Gram Sansad meetings out of total 1161 voters from Sansad no 82. Out of the 143 people 90 were male and 53 were female. The percentage of the people present in the meeting is 12.31% out of them 62.93% were male and 37% were female. 106 people participated in the Sansad meeting of Sansad No 87 out of 550 voters. From 106 (19.27%) people 84 (79.24%) were male and 22 (20.75%) were female. 181 (17.69%) people were participated in the meeting of the Sansad no 88 and out of them 95 (52.49%) were male and 86 (47.51%) were female. The Sansad meeting of the Sansad No 89 was adjourned due to lack of quorum, but this adjourned meeting was held within seven days as per Sansad meeting rule. The attendance in the meeting was 133 (11.14%), out of them 78 (14.68%) were male and 55 (41.35%) were female. In the same year 74 (14.68%) people were present in the meeting out of 504 voters in the Sansad no 90. Out of them 64 (86.49%) were male and 10 (13.51%) were female. 110 (17.32%) people were attended in the Gram Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 91 in same year. Out of them 82 (74.55%) were male and 28 (25.45%) were female. 118 (10.8%) people were present in the Sansad No 92 where 101 (85.59%) were male and 17 (14.41%) were female. 116 (11.12%) people were present in the Sansad No 93 out of 1043 voters. Out of them 77 (66.38%) were male and 39 (33.62%) were female. 191 (17.54%) people were present in the meeting of the Sansad no 94, out of them 143 (74.87%) were male and 48 (25.13%) were female. 208 (21.62%) people were present in the Sansad no 95 from them 188 (90.38%) people were male and 20 (9.62%) were female. 108 (15.10%) people participated in the Gram Sansad meeting in 2003-04 in Sansad no 96 out of total 715 voters. Out of them 96 (88.89%) were male and 12 (11.11%) were female.

In 2004-05, 223 (19.21%) people were present in the meeting of Sansad no 82 where 181 (81.17%) were male and 42 (18.83%) were female. 205 (37.27%) people were present in the Gram Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 87 in the same year. Out of them 125 (60.98%) were male and 80 (39%) were female. 159 people were present in the Sansad meeting in Sansad no 88 out from the total voters 1023. Out of them 116 (72.96%) were male and 43 (27%) female. 236 (19.77%) people participated in the Sansad no 89, and out of them 135 (57.20%) were male and 101 (42.80%) were female. Only 67 (13.29%) people were present in the Sansad no 90 out of which 46 (68.66%) were male and 21 (31.34%) were female. 112 (17.64%) people participated in the Sansad no 91 in the year 2004-05, and out of them 50

(44.64%) were male and 62 (53.36%) were female. In the same year in the half-yearly meeting in the Sansad no 92, 168 (15.37%) people participated out of a total of 1093 voters, where 110 (65.48%) were male and 58 (34.52%) were female. 122 (11.70%) people participated in the Sansad no 93 where 72 (59%) were male and 50 (40.98%) were female. 206 (18.92%) people participated in the Sansad no 94 where 127 (61.65%) were male and 79 (38.35%) were female. In the same year 270 (28%) people participated in the Sansad no 95 where 245 (90.74%) were male and 25 (9.26%) were female. 137 (19.16%) people participated in the Sansad no 96 where 81 (59.12%) were male and 56 (40.88%) were female.

In the year 2005-06, the half- yearly meeting of the Sansad no 82 was held in the due time where 233 (20%) people were present; out of them 167 (71.67%) were male and 66 (28.33%) were female. 112 (20.36%) people were present in the meeting of the Sansad no 87 out from the total voters 550 where 57 (50.89%) were male and 55 (49%) were female. 149 (14.57%) people were present in the meeting of the Sansad no 88 where 74 (49.66%) were male and 75 (50.34%) were female. In the same year 235 (19.68%) people participated in the Sansad no 89 where 150 (63.83%) were male and 85 (37.17%) people were female. 95 (18.85%) people participated in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad No 90. Out of them 69 (72.63%) were male and 26 (27.37%) were female. 90 (14.17%) people participated in the Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 91 where 64 (71.11%) were male and 26 (28.89%) were female. 187 (17.11%) people participated in the meeting of the Sansad no 92 where 101 (54%) were male and 86 (45.99%) were female. In the same year 122 (11.70%) people participated in the Sansad no 93 where 66 (54%) people were male and 56 (45.9%) people were female. 141 (12.95%) people participated in the meeting of the Sansad no 94 where 83 (58.87%) were male and 58 (41.13%) were female. 168 (17.46%) participated in the Sansad no 95 in the year 2005-06. Out of them 95 (56.55%) were male and 73 (43.45%) were female. 147 (20.56%) people participated in the Sansad no 96 where 81 (55%) were male and 66 (44.9%) were female.

It is clear from above discussion that the people's participation in Gram Sansad meetings only marginally crossed the quorum number. The Sansad meeting of the Sansad no. 89 was adjourned due to the lack of quorum in the year 2003-04. Women's participation was poorer than the male participation in the adjourned meeting. In 2003-04 the highest number of peoples participated in the meeting in the Sansad no 95 which is 21.62% and the lowest number of peoples participated in the Sansad no 92 which is only 10.8%. The highest number of males participated in the Sansad no 95 which is 90.38% and the lowest number of people

only 52.49% participated in the Sansad no 88 in the same year. The highest number of women participated in the Sansad no 88, which is 47.51% and the lowest number of women participated in the Sansad no 95 which is only 9.62%. In the year 2004-05 the highest number of people participated in the Sansad no 87 which is 37.23% and the lowest number of people participated in the Sansad no 93 which is only 11.7%. The highest number of people 90.74% participated in the Sansad no 95 and the lowest 44.64% in the Sansad no 91. The highest number 53.36% women participated in the Sansad no 91 and lowest number only 9.26% women participated in the Sansad no 95. The highest number 20.56% people participated in the Sansad no 96 in 2004-05 and lowest number 11.17% people participated in the Sansad no 93. The highest number 72.63% males participated in the Sansad no 90 and lowest numbers 49.66% participated in the Sansad no 89. The highest number 50.34% women participated in the Sansad no 88 and lowest 27.37% women were participated in the Sansad no. 90. The highest number 37.27% people participated in the Sansad no. 87 and lowest 10.8% people participated in the Sansad no 92. The highest number 90.74% males were participated in the Sansad no 95 and lowest number 44.64% were participated in the Sansad no 91 in 2004-05. The highest number 53.36% women were participated in the Sansad no 91 from the year 2004-05 and lowest 9.62% in the Sansad no 95 from the year 2004-05 during this period.

It is noticed from the above discussion that most of the half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings during this period were held from 4PM to 5PM and mostly in the months of November and December in the school ground or open ground of the respective Sansad area. The attendance in the meetings was very poor but discussions in the meetings were very meaningful. All of the meetings of the Gram Sansad maintained the decorum of the Gram Sansad. Discussions in the meetings were over various developmental plans and programmes, and decision is taking democratically and selection of the beneficiaries for various schemes is also taking democratically in the Sansad during on that period. Researcher found various lists of beneficiaries of various schemes from the minute-books of the Sansad meetings. Researcher had personally meetings with the people for their views about the success of the participatory development. Most of the people are hopeful about the success of the participatory development. But one matter is noticed that the present people in the Gram Sansad meetings are mostly supporters of the ruling party. Due to the lack of the awareness about the role and importance of the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad people think that the meetings of the Sabha and Sansad are the meetings of the political party. So those who are not supporters of the ruling party are not interested to attend the meetings. They are also less

interested to the meetings because they think that the beneficiary lists are always made by the supporters of ruling party and they only include the names of their supporters. For this reason they are anger for these type of activities of the Gram Sabha and Sansad meetings. But one thing found that noticeable benefits of the developmental programmes have already been started to reach the people in the respective Sansad areas. According to the Report 2012 of the Gram Panchayat Office of Rampur-1 there are 105 self-help groups, 281 beneficiaries under National Old Pension Scheme, 93 widow beneficiaries under National Widow Scheme, 5 beneficiaries under National Physically Challenged Scheme and 49 beneficiaries under GR scheme.

Table 13: Attendance Report of Annual Gram Sansad Meetings of Rampur – I Gram Panchayat During the Year of 2003 – 2006

Sansad No.	Total Voters	Year 2003 - 04		Year 2004 - 05		Year 2005 - 06	
		Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %	Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %	Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %
82	1161	153 (13.18%)	46 (30.07%)	156 (13.44%)	47 (30.13%)	223 (19.71%)	71 (31.84%)
87	550	113 (20.55%)	20 (17.7%)	156 (28.36%)	45 (28.85%)	123 (22.36%)	37 (30.08%)
88	1023	134 (13.1%)	37 (27.61%)	133 (12.89%)	44 (33.08%)	153 (14.96%)	41 (26.8%)
89	1194	152 (12.73%)	54 (35.53%)	151 (12.65%)	50 (33.11%)	154 (12.9%)	50 (32.47%)
90	504	80 (15.87%)	15 (18.75%)	92 (18.25%)	23 (25%)	85 (16.87%)	17 (20%)
91	635	119 (18.74%)	31 (26.05%)	81 (12.76%)	24 (29.63%)	88 (13.86%)	24 (27.27%)
92	1093	135 (12.35%)	16 (11.85%)	110 (10.06%)	08 (7.27%)	146 (13.36%)	37 (25.34%)
93	1043	154 (14.77%)	64 (41.56%)	121 (11.6%)	33 (27.27%)	115 (11.03%)	44 (38.26%)
94	1089	210 (19.28%)	67 (31.9%)	178 (16.35%)	60 (30.71%)	158 (14.51%)	67 (42.41%)
95	962	177 (18.4%)	44 (24.86%)	48 (4.99%)	20 (41.67%)	163 (16.94%)	33 (20.25%)
96	715	153 (21.4%)	32 (20.92%)	122 (17.06%)	15 (12.3%)	138 (19.3%)	58 (42.03%)

Source: Rampur – I Gram Panchayat Office

To investigate various dimensions of people's participation in Gram Sansad researcher analysed the data of annual meetings of Gram Sansad meetings of Rampur – 1 during the period of 2003-06. In 2003-04, 153 (13.18%) people were present in the Gram Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 82 out of 1161 voters. Out of these participants 107 (69.93%) were male and 46 (30.07%) were female. 113 (20.55%) people were present out of 550 voters in the Sansad no 87. Out of them 93 (82.3%) were male and only 20 (17.7%) were female. 134 (13.1%) people were present out of a total of 1023 voters in the Sansad no 88. Out of them 97 (72.39%) were male and 37 (27.61%) were female. 152 (12.73%) people were present in the Gram Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 89. Out of them 98 (64.47%) were male and 54 (35.53%) were female. 80 (15.87%) people were present in the Sansad no 90. Out of them 65 (81.25%) were male and only 15 (18.75%) were female. 119 (18.74%) people were present in the Sansad no 91 out of a total of 635 voters. Out of them 88 (73.95%) were male and 31 (26.05%) were female. In the Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 92, 135 (12.35%) were present in the meeting out of a total of 1093 voters. Out of the total attendance 119 (88.15%) were male and only 16 (11.85%) were female. In the Sansad no 93, 154 (14.77%) people were present. Out of them 90 (58.44%) were male and 64 (41.56%) were female. In the same year 210 (19.28%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 94. Out of them 143 (68.1%) were male and 67 (31.9%) were female. 177 (18.4%) voter were present in the Sansad no 95 out from the total of 962 voters. Out of them 133 (75.14%) were male and 44 (24.86%) were female. 153 (21.4%) people were present in the yearly meeting of the Sansad no. 96 out from the 715 voters. Out of them 121 (79.08%) were male and 32 (20.92%) were female.

In 2004-05, all of the meetings of the Gram Sansad were held. 156 (13.44%) people were present in the Sansad no 82. Out of them 109 (69.87%) were male and 47 (30.13%) were female. In the Sansad no 87, 156 (28.36%) people were present in the Sansad meeting. Out of them 111 (71.15%) were male and 45 (28.85%) were female. 133 (12.89%) people were present in the Sansad no 88 out from the total of 1023 voters. Out of the total voters 89 (66.92%) were male and 44 (33.08%) were female. In the same year 151 (12.65%) people were presented in the Sansad no 89 out of 1194 voters. Out of them 101 (66.89%) were male and 50 (33.11%) were female. 92 (18.25%) people were present in the Gram Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 90 out from total 509 voters. Out of them 69 (75%) were male and 23 (25%) were female. 81 (12.76%) people were present in the Sansad no 91. Out of them 57

(70.37%) were male and 24 (29.63%) were female. 110 (10.06%) people participated in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 92. This meeting only touched the quorum number. Out of 110 people 102 (92.73%) were male and only 08 (7.27%) were female. 121 (11.6%) people were present in the Sansad no 93 out from total 1043 voters. Out of them 88 (72.73%) were male and 33 (27.27%) were female. In the Sansad no 94, 178 (16.35%) people were present in the yearly Sansad meeting out from the 1089 voters. Out from the 178 people 118 (66.29%) were male and 60 (30.71%) were female. The yearly meeting of the Sansad no 95 was adjourned due to lack of quorum. Only 48 (4.99%) people were present at the meeting; out of them 28 (58.33%) were male and 20 (41.67%) were female. 122 (17.06%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 96 out from 715 voters. Out of 122 attendants 107 (87.7%) were male and only 15 (12.3%) were female.

In the year 2005-06, the yearly meeting of the Gram Sansad in the Sansad no 82 was held in the month of May. 223 (19.71%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in Sansad no 82; out of them 152 (68.16%) were male and 71 (31.84%) were female. 123 (22.36%) people were present in the yearly meeting in the Sansad no 87. Out of them 86 (69.92%) voters were male and 37 (30.08%) were female. 153 (14.96%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 88. Out of them 112 (79.74%) were male members and 41 (26.8%) were female members. 154 (12.9%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 89. Out of them 104 (67.53%) people were male and 50 (32.47%) people were female. 85 (16.87%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 90 out from the total 504 voters. From the total voters 68 (80%) were male and only 17 (20%) were female. 88 (13.86%) people were present in the Sansad no 91 out from total of 635 voters. Out of them 64 (72.73%) people were male and 24 (27.27%) people were female. Gram Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 92 was held in the month of May and 146 (13.36%) people were present at the meeting. Out of the total attendance 109 (74.66%) were male and 37 (25.34%) were female. In the same year 115 (11.03%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 93 where 71 (61.74%) were male members and 44 (38.26%) were female members. 158 (14.51%) people were present in the Sansad no 94 out from the total 1089 voters. Out from the 158 people 91 (57.6%) were male and 67 (42.41%) were female. 163 (16.94%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 95. Out from the total attendance 130 (79.75%) were male and 33 (20.25%) were female. In the same year 138

(19.3%) people were present in the Sansad no 96 at the annual meeting. Out from the 138 voters 80 (57.99%) were male and 58 (42.03%) female.

The above discussion about the attendance in the Gram Sansad meetings which were held during the period of 2003-2006 clearly shows that the participation in the Gram Sansad meetings is very poor. But participation is very important for the success of the participatory development. Without mass participation in the Gram Sansad meetings the desired result of the participatory development will not emerge. But all of the Sansad meetings showed that the participation barely crossed the quorum number. It is not a good sign for the success of the participatory development. All of the Sansad meetings were held between 4PM to 6PM in a school ground or open ground in a temporary shed made by the tarpaulin. Rampur – I Gram Panchayat announced the date and place of the meetings in advance by using microphone and by hanging notices on the notice boards. Interestingly, it was noticed that those who attended the meetings participated in the discussions freely. Women also participated in the discussions. Researcher noticed that most of the participants were ruling party supporters as same as the half-yearly meetings, and that most of the time they indulged in party-based discussions rather than in discussions that focused on issues related to development. In 2004-05 the yearly Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 95 was adjourned due to the lack of quorum. More or less average people participation in the Gram Sansad meetings is same in both half-yearly and annual meetings during the period of 2003-06 which was between 10% and 20% only. The women attendance was much lower than male participation in the Sansad meetings. In 2004-05 only 08 women which is 7.27% participated in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 92. The trend of people's participation in the Gram Sansad meetings, both annual and half-yearly, does not offer hope for the success of the participatory development. Attendance of the people always recorded between 10% - 20% in both of the annual and half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings. This attendance is not hopeful for the success of the participatory development.

5.2.2 Field Experience from Khagrabari Gram Panchayat

Khagrabari Gram Panchayat is under Coochbehar Sadar Block – II of Coochbehar Sadar of Coochbehar district. The total area of the Gram Panchayat is 3,534.97 acres. Khagrabari Gram Panchayat is very close to Coochbehar municipality. Chakchaka Gram Panchayat makes the east boundary of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. Three Gram Panchayats namely

Baneswar, Gopalpur and Dangdingguri make the north boundary of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. Coochbehar Municipality makes the south boundary of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. Two Gram Panchayats, namely Takagach and Dangdingguri, together make the west boundary of the Gram Panchayat. The total population of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat is 35,521. Out of this population 18,108 are male and 17,413 are female. There are 03 government aided high schools and 01 MSK. There are 13 primary schools and 3 SSK and also 4 private schools for the education of the Gram Panchayat area and adjoining areas. There are 01 government Hospitals, 04 Health Centres and also 01 Private Nursing Home for boosting up of the medical facilities for the people of the GP area and adjoining areas. There are 04 nationalized banks for the banking service for the GP area and adjoining areas. At present there are 17 elected Gram Panchayat members are there in this GP at the time of last visit to the office by the researcher, out of them 13 were male and 04 were female. The present Pradhan of the Gram Panchayat is a female member.

To investigate the role of Gram Sansad for facilitating participatory development, researcher studied people's participation in the Gram Sansad meetings of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat during 2003 to 2006. This Gram Panchayat had 16 Gram Sansad on that time in his jurisdiction. Researcher personally attended all the Gram Sansad meetings at the respective Gram Sansad during this time. Researcher also collected data and information of the Gram Sansad from the Gram Panchayat Office. Researcher also personally interviewed the people from the respective Gram Sansad at that time and also very recent time for verification. Researcher personally talked with the Pradhan, Gram Panchayat members and officials from that time to present day.

Table 14: Attendance Report of the Half-Yearly Gram Sansad Meetings of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat During the Period of 2003 – 2006

Sansad No.	Total Voters	Year 2003 - 04		Year 2004 - 05		Year 2005 - 06	
		Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %	Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %	Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %
93	917	-----	-----	-----	-----	168 (18.32%)	46 (27%)
94	897	92 (10.26%)	27 (29%)	88 (9.81%)	31 (35%)	-----	-----
95	667	63 (9.45%)	19 (30%)	-----	-----	29 (4.35%)	07 (24%)
96	925	89 (9.62%)	31 (35%)	67 (7.24%)	33 (49%)	-----	-----
100	1268	129 (10.17%)	48 (37%)	107 (8.44%)	29 (27%)	175 (13.8%)	48 (27%)
101	1293	102 (7.89%)	16 (15%)	127 (9.82%)	25 (20%)	183 (14.15%)	34 (19%)
102	570	72 (12.63%)	13 (18%)	39 (6.84%)	02 (5%)	-----	-----
				36 (6.32%)	04 (11%)		
103	609	76 (12.47%)	16 (21%)	39 (6.4%)	06 (15%)	32 (5.25%)	05 (16%)
						29 (4.76%)	03 (10%)
105	1055	98 (9.30%)	05 (5%)	90 (8.53%)	20 (22%)	27 (2.56%)	00(0%)
106	1123	119 (10.6%)	44 (37%)	83 (7.39%)	37 (45%)	66 (5.88%)	22 (33%)
107	980	98 (10%)	14 (14%)	105 (10.71%)	08 (8%)	30 (3.06%)	09 (30%)
109	1034	145 (14.02%)	35 (24%)	22 (2.13%)	04 (18%)	-----	-----
				91 (8.8%)	22 (24%)		
111	870	114 (13.1%)	33 (29%)	94 (10.8%)	32 (34%)	94 (10.81%)	17 (18%)
112	856	109 (12.73%)	45 (41%)	121 (14.14%)	48 (40%)	76 (8.88%)	48 (63%)
113	1204	73 (6.06%)	21 (29%)	85 (7.05%)	20 (24%)	-----	-----
114	1175	36 (3.06%)	12 (33%)	101 (8.6%)	25 (25%)	-----	-----
		43 (3.66%)	11 (26%)				

Source: Khagrabari Gram Panchayat Office

To investigate various dimensions of people's participation in Gram Sansad researcher studied the attendance of the people's participation in half-yearly Gram Sansad meetings of all of the Gram Sansad during 2003-2006. For 2003-2004, no data of attendance of the half-yearly meeting are available from the Sansad no 93. In the same half-yearly meeting of Sansad no 94, only 92 (10.62%) people were present. Out of the 92 people 65 (70.65%) were male and 27 (29%) were female. 63(9.45%) people participated in the Sansad

no 95 out of 667 voters. Out of them 44 (69.84%) were male and 19 (30%) were female. 89 (9.62%) people were present in the half-yearly Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 96. Out of the total participants 58 (65.17%) were male and 31 (35%) were female. 129 (10.17%) people were present in the Sansad no 100. Out of the total participants 81 (62.79%) were male and 48 (37%) were female. In the Sansad no 101, 102 (7.89%) people were present in the half-yearly meeting. This meeting did not touch the quorum number. But no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting on the ground of lack of quorum. Out of the total number of participants 86 (84.31%) were male and 16 (15%) were female. 72 (12.63%) people were present in the half-yearly meeting in the Sansad no 102. Out of them 59 (81.94%) people were male and 13 (18%) people were female. 76 (12.47%) people were present in the Sansad no 103. Out of them 60 (78.95%) people were male and 16 (21%) were female. In the same year at the half-yearly meeting in the Sansad no 105, 98 (9.3%) people were present including 93 male members (94.9%) and only 05 female members (5%). 119 (10.6%) people were present in the Sansad no 106 where 75 (63.02%) were male and 44 (37%) were female. In the Sansad no 107, 98 (10%) people were present in the Sansad meeting; out of them 84 (85.71%) were male and 14 (14%) were female. In the same year half-yearly meeting of the Sansad no 109, 145 (14.02%) people were present including 110 (75.86%) male and 35 (24%) female. 114 (13.1%) people were present in the Sansad no 111, where 81 (71.05%) were male and 33 (29%) were female. 109 (12.73%) people were present in the Sansad no 112 in half-yearly meeting; out of them 64 (58.72%) were male and 45 (41%) were female. In the half-yearly Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 113 only 73 (6.06%) people were present including 52 (71.23%) male and 21 (29%) female. This meeting also did not touch the quorum number, but no record was found about the adjournment of the meeting due to the lack of quorum. The half-yearly Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 114 in 2003-04 was adjourned due to the lack of quorum and this adjourned meeting was held on a date declared by the Gram Panchayat according to the Sansad meeting provision. In the first meeting of Sansad no 114, only 36 (3.06%) people were present including 24 (66.67%) male and 12 (33%) female. In the fresh meeting conducting after adjournment where only 43 (3.66%) people were present including 32 (74.42%) male and 11 (26%) female.

In the year 2004-05, the record or data of the Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 93 is not found. In the Sansad meeting of Sansad no 94, 88 (9.81%) people were present including 57 (64.77%) male and 31 (35%) female. The attendance record of the Sansad no 95 is also

not found. 67 (7.24%) people were present in the Sansad no 96 including 34 (50.75%) male and 33 (49%) female. This meeting did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. 107 (8.44%) people were present in the Sansad no 100; out of them 78 (72.9%) were male and 29 (27%) were female. 127 (9.82%) people were present in the Sansad no 101, out of them 102 (80.31%) were male and 25 (20%) were female. The meeting of the Sansad no 102 adjourned due to the lack of quorum. In the first meeting before adjournment only 39 (6.84%) people were present including 37 (94.87%) male and 02 (5%) female. In the fresh meeting after adjournment only 36 (6.32%) people were present including 32 (88.89%) male and 04 (11%) female. In the Sansad no 103 a meeting was held only with 39 (6.4%) people including 33 (84.62%) male and 06 (15%) female. 90 (8.53%) people were present in the Sansad no 105 including 70 (77.78%) male and 20 (22%) female. This meeting also did not touch the quorum number but there is no record for adjournment of the meeting. 83 (7.39%) people were present in the Sansad no 106 where 46 (55.42%) were male and 37 (45%) were female. This meeting also did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. 105 (10.71%) people were present in the Sansad no 107, where 97 (92.38%) were male and 08 (8%) were female. The Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 109 was adjourned due to the lack of quorum. In the first meeting before adjournment only 22 (2.13%) people were present including 18 (81.82%) male and 04 (18%) female. In the fresh meeting after adjournment total 91 (8.8%) people were present including 69 (75.82%) male and 22 (24%) female. 94 (10.8%) people were present in the Sansad no 111 including 62 (65.96%) male and 32 (34%) female. 121 (14.14%) people were present in the Sansad no 112 out from total 856 voters. Of the total voters, 73 (60.33%) were male and 48 (40%) were female. In the Sansad no 113, 85 (7.05%) people were present in the Sansad meeting including 65 (76.47%) male and 20 (24%) female. This meeting did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. In the Sansad no 114, 101 (8.6%) people were present in the Sansad meeting including 76 (75.25%) male and 25 (25%) female. This meeting did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting.

In the year 2005-06, 168 (18.32%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 93 out of total 917 voters. Out of them 112 (66.67%) were male and 47 (27%) were female. No record is found about the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 94. Only 29 (4.35%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 95 including 22

(75.86%) male and 07 (24%) female. This meeting did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. No record found from the Sansad no. 96 about the half-yearly meeting. 175 (13.8%) people were present in the Sansad no 100 out of total 1268 voters. Out of them 127 (72.57%) were male and 48 (27%) were female. 183 (14.15%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 101 including 149 (81.42%) male and 34 (29%) female. No record was found about the Sansad meeting held in the Sansad no 102 in 2005-06. The half-yearly Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 103 was adjourned due to the lack of quorum. In the first meeting before adjournment only 32 (5.25%) people were present including 27 (84.38%) male and 05 (16%) female. In the fresh meeting after adjournment only 29 (4.76%) people were present including 26 (89.66%) male and 03 (10%) female. Only 27 (2.56%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 105 where all of the 27 (100%) were male. No female were present in the meeting. This meeting did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. 66 (5.88%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 106 where 44 (66.67%) were male and 22 (33%) were female. This meeting also did not adjournment due to the lack of quorum. Only 30 (3.06%) people were present in the Sansad no 107 including 21 (70%) male and 09 (30%) female. This meeting also was adjourned due to the lack of quorum and no record is found about the conduct of fresh meeting in that year. No record is found about the half-yearly meeting of the Gram Sansad no 109 in 2005-06. 94 (10.81%) people were present in the Sansad no 111 including 77 (81.91%) male and 17 (18%) female. 76 (8.88%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 112 out from the total 856 voters. Out of the total participants 28 (36.84%) were male and 46 (63%) were female. No records are found about the meetings of the Sansad no 113 and 114 for the year of 2005-06.

Table 15: Attendance Report of Annual Gram Sansad Meetings of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat During the Period of 2003 – 2006

Sansad No.	Total Voters	Year 2003 - 04		Year 2004 - 05		Year 2005 - 06	
		Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %	Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %	Total number of attendance with %	Total number of women attendance with %
93	917	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
94	897	91 (10.14%)	39 (43%)	94 (10.47%)	39 (41%)	89 (9.92%)	39 (44%)
95	667	75 (11.24%)	28 (37%)	70 (10.44%)	37 (53%)	-----	-----
96	925	64 (6.92%)	29 (45%)	77 (8.32%)	43 (56%)	-----	-----
100	1268	117 (9.25%)	24 (21%)	91 (7.18%)	19 (21%)	118 (9.31%)	23 (20%)
101	1293	120 (9.28%)	14 (12%)	107 (8.28%)	28 (26%)	-----	-----
102	570	39 (6.84%)	03 (8%)	-----	-----	-----	-----
		29 (5.09%)	00 (0%)				
103	609	39 (6.4%)	06 (15%)	19 (3.12%)	00 (0%)	-----	-----
105	1055	78 (7.39%)	13 (17%)	79 (7.49%)	13 (16%)	-----	-----
106	1123	-----	-----	32 (30.03%)	08 (25%)	-----	-----
				70 (6.64%)	18 (26%)		
107	980	-----	-----	102 (10.41%)	07 (7%)	-----	-----
109	1034	71 (6.87%)	06 (8%)	100 (9.67%)	04 (4%)	-----	-----
		98 (9.48%)	13 (13%)				
111	870	-----	-----	92 (10.57%)	26 (28%)	-----	-----
112	856	126 (14.72%)	33 (26%)	101 (11.8%)	43 (43%)	-----	-----
113	1204	101 (8.39%)	24 (24%)	81 (6.73%)	17 (21%)	-----	-----
114	1175	106 (9%)	35 (33%)	102 (8.68%)	38 (37%)	-----	-----

Source: Khagrabari Gram Panchayat Office

To investigate various dimensions of people's participation in development plans, researcher investigated the people participation in the yearly Gram Sansad meetings of all the Gram Sansad of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. No record was found about the attendance of the Gram Sansad meeting held in the Sansad no 93 in the year 2003-04. In the same year 91 (10.14%) people were present in the meeting in the Sansad no 94 out from total 897 voters. Out of them 52 (57%) were male and 39 (43%) were female. In the Gram Sansad meeting of the Sansad no 95, 75 (11.24%) people were present in the meeting where 47 (63%) were male and 28 (37%) were female. 64 (6.92%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in Sansad no 96 out from total 925 voters including 35 (55%) male and 29 (45%) female. This annual meeting did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. 177 (9.25%) people were present in the Sansad no 100 including 93 (79%) male and 24 (21%) female. 120 (9.28%) people were present in the Sansad no 101 in 2003-04 including 106 (88%) male and 14 (12%) female. The annual meeting of the Sansad no 102 was adjourned due to the lack of quorum. In the first meeting before adjournment only 39 (6.84%) people were present including 36 (92%) male and only 03 (8%) female. Interestingly only 29 (5.09%) people were present in the meeting which was held after adjournment where all the participants were male. The meeting of the Sansad no 103 also adjourned due to the lack of quorum but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. Only 39 (6.4%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 103 including 33 (85%) male and 06 (15%) female. 78 (7.39%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 105 where 65 (83%) were male and 13 (17%) were female. This meeting also did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. The records of the Sansad meetings of the Sansad no 106,107 and 111 are not found. The annual meeting of the Sansad no 109 was adjourned due to the lack of quorum. In the adjourned meeting only 71 (6.87%) people were present including 65 (92%) male and 06 (8%) female. At the meeting which was held after adjournment, 98 (9.48%) people were present including 85 (87%) were male and 13 (13%) were female. 126 (14.72%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 112 including 93 (74%) male and 33 (26%) female. 101 (8.39%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 113. Out of them 77 (76%) were male and 24 (24%) were female. 106 (9%) people were present in the Sansad no 114 including 71 (67%) male and 35 (33%) female. According to the Sansad meeting norms these two meetings of Sansad no 113 and 114 did not touch the quorum number. But no records are found about the adjournment of the Sansad meetings.

The records of Sansad meetings of the Sansad no 93 were not found for the year of 2004-05. In the Sansad no 94, 94 (10.47%) people were present in the annual meeting. Out of them 55 (59%) were male and 39 (41%) were female. In the Sansad no 95 total 70 (10.49%) people were present in the Sansad meeting including 33 (47%) male and 37 (53%) female. 77 (8.32%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in Sansad no 96. Out of them 34 (44%) were male and 43 (56%) were female. This meeting did not touch quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. 91 (7.18%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in Sansad no 100. Out of them 72 (79%) were male and 19 (21%) were female. 107 (8.28%) people were present in the Sansad no 101 including 79 (74%) male and 28 (26%) female. The Sansad meetings of the Sansad no 100 and 101 did not touch the quorum numbers but did not found any adjournment record of the meetings. No annual meeting was held in the Sansad no 102. Only 19 (3.12%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 103 and all of the participants were male. The attendance at the meeting was very poor but no record is found about the adjournment of the meeting. Only 79 (7.49%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 105 including 56 (84%) male and 13 (16%) female. This meeting also did not touch the quorum number but no record about the adjournment of the meeting is found. In the Sansad no 106 the annual meeting was adjourned due to the lack of quorum and held within seven days after adjournment. In the first meeting held before adjournment where only 32 (3.03%) people were present where 24 (75%) were male and 08 (25%) were female. In the meeting which was held after adjournment only 70 (6.64%) people were present including 52 (74%) male and 18 (26%) female. 102 (10.41%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 107 out from total 980 voters. Out of them 95 (93%) were male and 07 (7%) were female. 100 (9.67%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 109 where 96 (96%) were male and only 04 (4%) were female. 92 (10.57%) people were present in the annual Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 111 where 66 (72%) were male and 26 (28%) were women. 101 (11.8%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 112 where 58 (57%) were male and 43 (43%) were female. In the Sansad no 113, 81 (6.73%) people were present at the annual meeting. Out of them 64 (79%) were male and 17 (21%) were female. 102 (8.68%) people were present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 114 including 64 (63%) male and 38 (37%) female. The meetings of Sansad nos 113 and 114 did not touch the quorum number.

In the year 2005-06 Gram Sansad meetings of all of the Sansads were not held. Gram Sansad meetings were held only in two Gram Sansads out of 16 Gram Sansads in 2005-06. 89 (9.92%) people were present in the annual meeting in the Gram Sansad no 94. Out of the total attendants 50 (56%) were male and 39 (44%) were female. 118 (9.31%) people were present in the annual meeting in the Sansad no 100. Out of them 95 (80%) people were male and 23 (20%) people were female. These two meetings also did not touch the quorum number but no record is found about the adjournment of the meetings. The annual meetings of the Sansad nos 93, 95, 96, 101, 102, 103, 105, 106, 107, 109, 111, 112, 113, and 114 were not held.

It is clear from the attendance data of the half-yearly meetings of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat during the period of 2003-06 that the attendance is very poor. Most of the half-yearly meetings during this period were not held. Most of the meetings during this period did not touch the quorum number. Only one half-yearly adjourned meeting of 2003-04 was held again but five meetings of Sansad nos 95, 96, 108, 113 and 114 did not touch the quorum number. The highest attendance in the half-yearly meeting was 14.02% from the Sansad no 109 in 2003-04. The lowest attendance recorded from the Sansad no 114 in the same year was only 3.06%. The highest women attendance recorded from the Sansad no 112 in the same year was only 41% and lowest attendance recorded from the Sansad no 105 which was only 5%. In the year 2004-05 two meetings of the Sansad no 93 and 95 were not held. 06 meetings were adjourned due to the lack of the quorum in the year 2004-05 but only two meetings were held after adjournment in the Sansad nos 102 and 109. The highest attendance in the half-yearly Gram Sansad was 14.14% from the Sansad no 112 and lowest attendance was 2.13% from the Sansad no 109. The highest women attendance was recorded from the Sansad no 96 which was 49% and lowest attendance from the Sansad no 102 which was only 5%. In the year 2005-06 the half-yearly meetings of the Sansad no 94, 96, 102, 109, 113 and 114 were not held. In this year 06 half-yearly meetings did not touch the quorum number but only one adjourned meeting was held after adjournment in the Sansad no 103. The highest attendance was recorded from the Sansad no 93 which was 18.32% and lowest attendance was recorded from the Sansad no 105 which was only 2.56%. The highest number of women participated in the half-yearly Sansad meeting from the Sansad no 112 which was 63% and lowest numbers of women participated in the meeting in the Sansad no 105. But it is interesting that all the participants actively took part in the discussion in the Sansad meetings. It is very interesting that most of the discussion of the meetings were local area development

based. Women also participated in the discussion. Most of the women raised their voice for inclusion of their names in the various beneficiary lists. One important thing is that women are now able to raising their voices in an open forum like Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad. It is very important for the success of the participatory development. One subject is found from comparative study between the Rampur- 1 Gram Panchayat and Khagrabari Gram Panchayat that women of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat are more educated than Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat. So they are easily able to participate in discussions but at the same time it is also found that many women of Khagrabari GP were not interested to participate in the meeting. Most of the people those who are present in the Sansad meetings in Khagrabari Gram Panchayat are demanded for extension of electricity, more roads in the area and conversion of roads from kacca to pucca, and the development of the drainage system of the areas. However, most of the meetings were held with very poor participants. But without mass participation it is impossible to identify real beneficiaries and the overall development of the rural area.

It is clear from the attendance data of the annual Gram Sansad meetings of Khagrabari Gram Panchayat during the period of 2003-06 that the people's participation was very poor in the decision-making process. In the year 2003-04, more than 10% people were present only in three Sansads namely Sansad no 94, 95 and 112. The highest attendance recorded from the Sansad no 112 was 14.72% in 2003-04 and the lowest attendance recorded from the Sansad no 102 was only 5.09%. On that year the Sansad meetings of the Sansad nos 93, 106 and 111 were not held. In the same year 10 Gram Sansad meetings did not touch quorum but meetings were held only in two Gram Sansad, namely 102 and 109, after adjournment. The highest women attendance in the Sansad meeting was 45% from the Sansad no 96 and lowest attendance was 8% recorded from the Sansad no 109, and no women were present in the annual Sansad meetings in the Sansad no 102. In the year 2004-05, the annual meetings of the Sansad no 93 and 102 were not held. In this year 09 Sansad meetings did not touch the quorum number, but only one Sansad meeting, of the Sansad no 106, was held after adjournment of the first meeting. The highest attendance in the annual Sansad meeting was 11.8% in the Sansad no 112 and lowest attendance in the Sansad meeting was 3.13% in the Sansad no 103. The highest women attendance was 56% in the same year in Sansad no 96 and no woman was present in the Sansad meeting in the Sansad no 103. In the year 2005-06, annual Sansad meetings were held only in two Gram Sansad, namely 94 and 100 out of 16 Gram Sansad. It is very negative signal to the Gram Sansad for established her as real people

forum. It is also very interesting that these two meetings of 2005-06 did not touch the quorum number. But those who were present in the Sansad meetings participated in discussion. Women also participated in discussions in the Sansad meetings. Most of the participants in the meetings are demanded for more roads and conversion of existing kachcha roads to pucca roads where necessary, more electricity connection in their respective Sansad area, development of the drainage system of the area, inclusion of more names in various beneficiary lists, development of drinking water supply system and proper sanitation for every beneficiary of their area. These types of developmental plan indicate that the most of the residents of the Gram Panchayats are depending on another profession besides agriculture. It is interesting that this Gram Panchayat is very close to the Coochbehar municipality so some part of the Gram Panchayat are develop like as municipal area. The residents of the adjoining area of the municipality of this Gram Panchayat living with like as municipal facilities. At present most of the employed persons and businessmen prefer to live in this Gram Panchayat area mainly for closeness to Coochbehar municipality. So the demands of the residents of this Gram Panchayat area are more development based than other Gram Panchayat areas of the district.

Comparatively more half yearly meetings were held than yearly meetings during this period. The half-yearly and annual meetings held in the year 2003-04 and 2004-05 were more or less the same in number. In 2003-04 one Sansad, Sansad no 93 did not conduct half-yearly meeting and in the year 2004-05 two Gram Sansads did not conduct their Sansad meetings. The annual meetings were not held in 5 Gram Sansad in 2003-04 and in 2 Gram Sansads in 2004-05. Half-yearly meetings also were not held in all the Sansad in 2005-06. It is very sad that only 2 Gram Sansad conducted their annual meetings in 2005-06. The attendance is more or less same in all half-yearly and annual Sansad meetings which were held during this period. Participation never crossed 20% in a single half-yearly or annual meeting. The highest attendance was only 18.32% recorded from half-yearly meeting of the Sansad no 93 in the year 2005-06 and the lowest attendance also found from the half-yearly meeting of the Sansad no 109 in the year 2004-05. The highest women attendance recorded from the half-yearly meeting in the Sansad no 112 was 63% in 2005-06. No women were present in the Sansad no 105 in 2005-06 and also at the yearly meeting in the Sansad no 102 in 2003-04 and Sansad no 103 in 2004-05. Researcher viewed that this is very detrimental to the success of participatory development. Without mass participation in Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha proper planning of the rural development is not possible. Discussions in the Sansad meetings

at Khagrabari Gram Panchayat were more or less the same in all Sansads and it is very interesting that those who were present in the meetings participated in debates and discussions about the local development in the Gram Sansad meeting.

A comparative study of the participation in Gram Sansad in Rampur – 1 and Khagrabari Gram Panchayat clearly indicates that the participation was more or less the same. Actually the extent of participation in Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha is more or less the same in all over the state from the very beginning of the emergence of these types of people's forum. People participation in Gram Sansad is slightly better in Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat than Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. The meetings of Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat were less frequently adjourned than the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. Only one half-yearly meeting of the Sansad no 89 of Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat was adjourned in the year 2003-04. All of the half-yearly meetings of Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat crossed the quorum number whereas one half-yearly meeting of Sansad no 114 was adjourned in 2003-04, 02 meetings were adjourned in the year 2004-05 of the Sansad no 102 and 109 and 01 meeting was adjourned in 2005-06 of the Sansad no 103 in Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. 09 Sansad meetings were not held in Khagrabari Gram Panchayat during this period whereas all meetings were held in Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat. In Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat only 01 annual Sansad meetings were adjourned in 2004-05, whereas 03 meetings were adjourned from the Sansad no 102, 103, and 109 in 2003-04, and 01 meeting was adjourned from the Sansad no 106 in 2004-05 in Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. Annual Gram Sansad meetings were held in all the Gram Sansads in Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat whereas 04 Sansad meetings were not held in 2003-04, 02 meetings were not held in 2004-05 and 14 Sansad meetings were not held in 2005-06 in Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. So it is clear from the above discussion that the performance of the Sansad meetings of the Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat was better than from the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. People's participation in Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat was better than the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat. But the participation in Sansad meetings of both Gram Panchayats is not hopeful for the success of participatory development. The discussions in the meetings were more agriculture and irrigation related in the Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat whereas discussions of the Khagrabari Gram Panchayat were more urban development related than agriculture related because Khagrabari Gram Panchayat is situated in very close to the Coochbehar town. Most of the people of Rampur – 1 Gram Panchayat are depending on agriculture for their livelihood but people of the Khagrabari mostly depending on service, business and professions other than

agriculture for their livelihood. Researcher noticed that the participation is slightly better in Rampur – I Gram Panchayat than from Khagrabari Gram Panchayat.

5.2.3 Factors of Non Participation in Gram Sansad

Gram Sansad is a platform for rural people for the overall rural development. But non participation of the people in Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha is a common feature of rural India. Large numbers of people do not attend the local governance body of direct democracy as such as Gram Sansad meetings of West Bengal. People are not interested and also unaware about the power and functions of the Gram Sabha. So it is very important to enquire about the factors which are responsible for the non participation in the Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad. From researcher's field survey from two selected Gram Panchayats of Coochbehar district, researcher has found some major factors which are responsible for the non participation in the Gram Sansad. These main factors are:-

- I) People are unaware about the functions and power of the Gram Sansad;
- II) People are unaware about their role in the developmental process;
- III) Illiteracy is a strong factor for the non participation of the people in Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad. Due to illiteracy people are not aware about their role in the developmental process. They think that the Gram Sansad is the meeting of 'babus' where they have not permission to entry. Most of the people think that Gram Sansad meeting is a meeting of Political Party, so they are not interested to attend this meeting;
- IV) Unwillingness of political parties to empower Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha is the another strong factor for the non participation in the Gram Sansad;
- V) Unwillingness of bureaucrats to transfer the power to the hands of rural people is another challenge to the success of gram Sansad.
- VI) Politicization of Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha by the ruling party has made these bodies a forum for party meetings; this is another cause for non participation;
- VII) The young generation, mainly belonging to the 18-25 age-group, is reluctant to participate in the Gram Sansad due to their unawareness about the actual role of the Gram Sansad. People in this age-group think that the meetings are only for

the guardian of each family and are held for offering token help to the rural poor. So this type of meetings will not help them in searching for job and in their education. So they are not interested to participate in the meetings. Researcher's views that the absence of this age-group from the Sansad Gram Sansad has lost much of its significance;

- VIII) Because of their unawareness about the proper function and role of the Gram Sansad, large numbers of people are not interested to participate in the meetings;
- IX) Most of the people think that participation in the Sansad and Sabha meetings is only a waste of time;
- X) Most of the people expressed their anger at the time of field work and they said that the powerful members of the ruling party never paid attention to the problems of the poor. So they are not interested to participate in the meetings of the Gram sabha and Gram sansad;
- XI) Opposition party supporters are not interested to participate in the Sabha and Sansad meetings due to rulling party domination;
- XII) Reluctance of the Central and State Governments to grants full autonomy to the Panchayati Raj Institution is a major factor for the non participation of the mass people;
- XIII) Without financial autonomy Gram Panchayat is working as an agent of the Central and State governments, so due to lack of financial power the Panchayati Raj Institution is not able to fulfill all the demands of the rural people;
- XIV) Corruption in the Panchayat's functionaries is a strong factor for the non participation of the people in the Gram Sansad;
- XV) Women are less interested to participate in the Gram Sansad meetings than men. Field observation indicates that women are not interested to participate in the Gram Sansad. Literacy of women is lower than men; so they are not aware about their role in the nation building. As a consequence, they are reluctant to participate in the Gram Sansad;
- XVI) Overburden of the household works above women is another reason for the non participation in the meetings;

XVII) Timing of the meetings is another reason for the non participation of women in the meetings;

XVIII) Traditional mindsetup of the male members of the family is responsible for non participation of women in the meetings.

Panchayat Election 2013 in West Bengal was held strictly maintain to 50% reservation for women in all three tiers of the Panchayati Raj Institution. This is very good news for the empowerment of women and their participation in the Gram Panchayat. But the real factor is that the relative/husband/father/brother is actual player behind the screen. Researcher found from field observation that women representatives have been playing their roles under instructions from husband/father/brother or party leaders. They only play their role like as doll controlled by a string; the actual role is played by their so-called guardians. So it is very difficult to empowering all sections of people only under Constitutional law. But the good news is that now women of rural areas are freely raising their voices for their development. This is very good news for the success of participatory development. Rural women are also less interested to participate in Gram Sansad because after finishing their household work they feel tired. Our traditional family customs are also another cause for the non participation of the women in Gram Sansad.

It is our duty to remove these types of obligation and try to create awareness programmes to encourage mass participation in Gram Sansad, and to organize awareness programmes about the role and functions of the Gram Sansad by the Government among people in order to improve the participation in Gram Sansad. If, people are understand that they are part of the development process, they may easily participate in the Gram Sansad for their own interest. Mass education will improve the people's participation in Gram Sansad. Right to Education Act, 2009 gave ample scope to the people for mass education. Under this act it is mandatory on the part of every guardian to send his or her children to school. This are meant to improve quantity and quality of education for all. Researcher view is that this type of initiatives are ought to improve the literacy rate which will boost people's participation in the Gram Sansad. Researcher also views that the political parties are able to set up strong grassroots base by the help of participation in Gram Sansad. Awareness about the role of Gram Sansad among people in the age group

of 18-25 years will improve people's participation in Gram Sansad. Dynamic initiative of the Central and State governments will also will be able to improve people's participation in the Gram Sansad. Researcher vived that the policy of 50% reservation for women in Panchayati Raj Institution has the potential to enhance the participation of women in Gram Sansad which will facilitate participatory development.

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