

Chapter -2

2.1. Statement of Problem

The district of Cooch Behar still remains backward. The overall situation with regard to development of the rural people in the district leaves much to be desired.

Locational disadvantage, poor communication, traditional production in agriculture, poor irrigation facilities, continuous soil erosion, flood or devastations caused by frequent course change of rivers in the district, poverty, illiteracy etc. were all the constraints that could not be eradicated so far.

Though the government failed, since the Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) cannot be done away with, there is the need to redefine the role among the PRIs and people's initiatives.

Problems lie with insufficient attention and care towards the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) on the part of the government in the district of Cooch Behar. Herculean Problems lie with the treatment to those people of the district of Cooch Behar where 93 percent population live in rural areas and 52 percent belong to scheduled castes and scheduled tribes who also belong to socio-economically backward class. There is illiteracy, lack of scientific knowledge, therefore, their empowerment are being delayed. People and village Panchayat's representative are not aware of the concept of 'Complete Sanitation' too.

Nevertheless, so many basic problems, needs, demands and also solution to the problems are voiced and reflected by some people through various kinds of civil society organizations in the district but it is rarely consulted with.



Problems at the rural level in the district could have been identified and eradicated if a close relationship was being maintained between the PRIs and the CSOs. But the PR bodies remained ill equipped in terms of manpower and resources to motivate the CSOs.

2.2. Objective of the Study

The objective of the research has been thought to be concentrated upon the following fundamental items: ~

- (i) To find the present nature of the people's actions at the grassroots level through the civil society organizations
- (ii) To find the PRIs- Civil Society Organization (CSOs) relationship at the rural level in the district of Cooch Behar.
- (iii) To find the future potentiality of the civil society with a view to help good governance and development at the rural level on a sustainable basis.
- (iv) To find the pluralist nature of governance at the rural level in the district of Cooch Behar.
- (v) To find the nature of development that keep pace with the latest development imperatives in the district of Cooch Behar.

2.3. Review of Literature

The foregoing analysis is carried out keeping in view the concepts of 'decentralized governance', 'humane governance', 'democratic governance' and 'civic governance', for appropriate fitting into a holistic, diversified and pro-people governance for the rural society. The idea of this study is developed by the

concept of ‘humane governance’ as enunciated by Mahbubul Haq (1996) and later by Mahbubul Haq Development Centre (1999) in the analysis of ‘*crisis of governance*’ in the ‘South Asia’.

Continuous attempts on the dynamic changes understanding Governance by the World Bank (1994), UNDP (1997), Commission on Global Governance (1995), OECD etc. have been studied to get broader idea of governance.

Besides, the valuable essays, which were written in ‘*Decentralized Governance in the Asian Countries*’, edited by *Abdul Aziz* and *David Arnold* (1996) became the ideal document for studying the rural governance, among which *Alex B. Brillantes, Jr*’s comment deserved attention by the researcher.

In his own words: *Governance, as commonly understood, has always been the responsibility of the government, which after all, is mandated to govern i.e. provide leadership in the delivery of basic services to the people, and in the process, exercise predominating influence and legitimacy.*

However, because of a number of constraints – ranging from limited sources to bureaucratic problems like red tape and corruption – conventional structures and processes of government have become generally ineffective in fulfilling their tasks of governance.....

Thus, extra governmental structures – including the private sector, NGOs and POs – have taken on the tasks of governance, more specifically in the delivery of basic services, active development work, and consequently increased influence and legitimacy at the local levels’.

The above-mentioned line, Alex commented from his Philippine Experience. Many years ago, Public Administration Author like *Mohit Bhattacharya (1981)* supported the theme in analyzing the case of the developing countries.

In '*Public Administration*' Chapter II, he believed, 'the range and scale of government activities have been increasing with more and more involvement of government in the regulation of public affairs and the supply of commodities and services for the benefit of the people. This is particularly true of the developing countries where governments have a crucial role to play in bringing about radical socio-economic changes... Experience shows, however, that government is not efficient as it should be'.

The responsibility of the state is counted by the logistic support while we study *Rehman Sobhan (2001)* 'Planning and Public Action for Asian Women' where his presumption was that 'the state in many Asian Politics accountable for all that happens to its women or indeed its citizens'.

With regard to the development for a rural society, people-centred development with participation of the disadvantaged section is given attention. The concepts of '*Human Development*' by *Mahbubul Haq (1996)*, '*Alternative Development*' by *Rajni Kothari (1998)*, *Rural Development Sector Policy Paper by World Bank (1975)*, *Sustainable Development by World Bank (1999)* etc. have been consulted for.

Political Economy Approach of 1960-70s, have been studied to understand the correlation between governance and development. Critical evaluation on democracy, development and governance as examined in a number of essays in '*Democracy and Development*' Edited by *Adrian Leftwitch (1996)* helped a lot to understand the views of participatory democracy as well as democratic governance from the liberal view.

B.N.A. (Basic Needs Approach) to development of the 1970s have been carefully considered for the rural people especially upon those who are affected by

abject poverty. *I.L.O.'s (International Labour Organization) views* and *S.C. Dube (1988)* are thus studied for.

With the rapid change to the politics and society as the demand for redistribution, localization have been the order of these days, the suggestion from *S.N. Ray (1995) 'Communication in Rural Development'* for '*endogamous development*' or '*carefully managed decentralization*' by *World Bank (1999)* provided with '*Civic governance*' as suggested by *Mahbubul Haq Human Development Centre (1999)* and also by *World Bank 2000: Entering 21st century, World Development Report 1999/2000 August, 1999 have been valued a lot.*

The theoretical basis for the study is also helped by the content from Neera Chandoke (1994) 'The State and Civil Society', where civil societies are suggested to be reconsidered.

Since the concepts of governance and development achieved newer meaning with the rapid changing circumstances, the practical application to a developing country like India with respect to the participation of the State by its governmental activities through the Panchayat at the Micro level and the participation of non-governmental activities through the Panchayat at the Micro level and the participation of non-governmental organization have been consulted with.

Major institutional reforms that were undertaken during *1950's* and early *60s* included abolition of Zamindary system, community Development Programme, the introduction of 73rd and 74th Amendment Act for progressive and constitutional weightage to Panchayat Raj Institutions at the rural level have been examined. Besides, the introduction of Minimum needs programme in the *70's* and the establishment and functions of the *District Rural Development Agency (DRDA)*

in the 80's and other development Plans that brought qualitative and quantitative changes in the rural life have also been viewed.

Since Participation is a pre-condition for receipt of development benefits, the recent development of Gram Sansad or Gram Sabha at the Panchayat, the role of a number of *Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) and Civil Society Organization (CSOs)* through which voice are actively comes (i.e. from the below) and by which the rural people take part in the development process have been carefully analyzed to inculcate better governance for the people at the rural level.