

PREFACE

The present study is an attempt to examine the role and functions of Panchayati Raj institutions in the context of rural development with special emphasis on Panchayat Leaders. The relevance of this enquiry is to be traced back to numerous volumes of Studies done on Panchayats during the last two decades. Panchayati Raj was conceived as an institution to carry out successful implementation of Community Development Programme at the village level in India. This was done at the recommendation of Balwantrai Mehta Committee. Having accepted the recommendation the Government of India not only took steps to introduce Panchayati Raj throughout the country but also treated it with importance in the successive plan period in respect of the rural development. It explains why the rural leadership there became increasingly important, that being the sole agency for executing development plans. Therefore, to a large extent, the success or failure of these plans depended significantly on the capability of the emerging leadership at the grass-root level.

In this thesis, I have tried to cover the different aspects of Rural Leadership, Panchayati Raj and Rural Development by conducting a study of Jhargram sub-division which is located in the North Western part of Midnapur District in West Bengal. The thesis is broadly divided in Seven chapters; viz., (1) Introduction ; (2) The Region and the District (3) Caste Communities in the Region and Socio-Political Processes; (4) The Panchayat Leaders ; (5) Panchayat Leaders and Villages : Their Ideas - Aspirations and Expectation; (6) Panchayat Activities in the Selected areas - A Comparative Study and (7) General Observations.

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