

**PARTICIPATORY ROLE OF SCHEDULED CASTES
AND SCHEDULED TRIBES PEOPLE AT
CONSTITUTIONAL GAON PANCHAYATS: A
STUDY OF SUALKUCHI BLOCK, KAMRUP**

**REPORT OF MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT PREPARED WITH THE
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION**

BY

Ramen Medhi

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SUREN DAS COLLEGE, HAJO

KAMRUP (ASSAM)

**PARTICIPATORY ROLE OF SCHEDULED CASTES
AND SCHEDULED TRIBES PEOPLE AT
CONSTITUTIONAL GAON PANCHAYATS: A
STUDY OF SUALKUCHI BLOCK, KAMRUP**

**REPORT OF MINOR RESEARCH PROJECT PREPARED WITH THE
FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE OF UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION**

BY

**Ramen Medhi
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
SUREN DAS COLLEGE, HAJO
KAMRUP (ASSAM)**



Office of the Principal
SUREN DAS COLLEGE: HAJO
P.O.-Hajo; Dist-Kamrup, Assam; Pin- 781102

Ph.: (0361) 2820341 (O)
Fax: (0361) 2820341
Mobile: 94353-21422


Website
www.surendacollege.org
E-mail:
ramen_talukdar52@yahoo.com

Ref. No. :

Date :

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that **Mr. Ramen Medhi**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science of our College has completed his Minor Research Project on "**Participatory Role of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes People at Constitutional Gaon Panchayat: A Study of Sualkuchi Block, Kamrup**". His project was approved by the University Grants Commission, New Delhi in Eleventh Plan vide Letter No. F.5-143/2011-12 (MRP/NERO)/10666 Dated 29-11-2011 and forwarded for submission in the North East Regional Office, Guwahati-06 subject to fulfilling the UGC guideline.


(Dr. Ramen Talukdar)
Principal
Suren Das College, Hajo
Kamrup, Assam

PREFACE

After the enactment of the constitutional mandate, for the first time the Assam Panchayat Election was held in 2001. Accordingly, the Constitutional Panchayats have been functioning in Assam since May, 2002. Therefore, along with other classes, people belonging to the rural SCs and STs have got chance to participate in the decision making process of the PRIs. Participation we mean, direct involvement of the people. But, the so called representatives of the people are most likely to represent the rich rather than the interest of the poor majority and downtrodden section. However, to understand the social system, equitable participation of the poor in the process of development can be regarded as a gradual process. The process can be accelerate only when the poor and disadvantaged classes becomes conscious of their right and privileged and build up faith and confidence in them through united strength to achieve justice for themselves in sharing of benefits in development.

The 73rd Constitution Amendment has brought a revolutionary change towards the Rural Local -Self Government of India. The radical nature of the 73rd Amendment Act of 1992 lies in its provisions to confer Panchayats constitutional status with powers and fiscal autonomy in order to function as self-governing units. Thus, the third generation of Panchayati Raj System has come into existence in the country.

The Constitution of India empowers the government to provide special benefits and preference to the previously disadvantaged section of population. In fact, the 73rd Constitution Amendment provides an opportunity to the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) population in the decision making process through the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Article 243D of the Constitution provides for reservation of seats in the PRIs at all levels. Besides, one-third of such reserved seat shall be allocated for the women of the SCs and the STs. As socio-economically as well as politico-administratively backward classes of the society, these disadvantaged groups of people have got an opportunity to take part in the decision making process, implementation of development project as well as the participation of sharing the benefits of development. In Assam, the Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 was passed in conformity with provision of the 73rd Constitution Amendment.

The area for the study is the Gaon Panchayats (GP) and their Gaon Sabhas under Sualkuchi Development Block where according to the population census, 2001; the SC and ST comprise 15.2 and 2.6 percent respectively. The study area has got the heterogeneous character. Besides, out of eight GPs, three are cottage industry base and five are agrarian base. Thus, it has made

the field study more significant. The present study is undertaken with a view to evaluate the participatory role of the SC and the ST in the Constitutional Panchayats. It is fact finding investigation with interpretation.

The work is divided into eight chapters. In the introductory chapter, an attempt has been made to analyse the theoretical concept of the PRIs along with basic concept of Democratic Decentralization and the meaning of People's Participation. The second chapter is the present study which deals with a brief profile of the study area, Scope and Significance of the Study, Review of the Literature, the objectives of Study, and Methodology. The third chapter deals with the evolutionary perspective of the PRIs in India with special reference to Assam. The fourth chapter attempt to analyse the organisational structure of the PRIs. It highlights the organisational structure of the PRIs under B.R. Mehta Committee and Asoka Mehta Committee and the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. It also focuses on the structural pattern of the PRIs in Assam with special reference to the study area. The fifth chapter analyses the functioning of the Constitutional Gaon Panchayats. It stresses that the issue of governance has assumed more importance with the introduction of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The chapter sixth analyses the role of the Gaon Sabha. It focuses that to make Gaon Sabha a real legislature of the rural people, the government must provide controlling, decision making and monitoring power to it. The seventh chapter deals with the participatory role of the SC and the ST people in the GP. It highlighted the involvement of this downtrodden section of people of the society in the activities of the GP. The last chapter (conclusion) deals with a brief summary, findings and recommendations.

In connection with my field work, I visited various villages of the study area and met different elected functionaries of the Panchayats, the Gaon Sabha members, the GP secretaries and other members of the Civil Society. They provided me with relevant data for my work. I would remain grateful to them.

The report has been prepared with the financial assistance of the University Grants Commission and I am privileged to acknowledge my sincere gratitude to the Commission.

Finally, it may be anticipated that the study that proves to be very relevant to comprehend the concept of democratic decentralization in true sense of the term and it will help the planners, policy makers and the policy implementers.

Ramen Medhi

Ramen Medhi

10/10/2013



CONTENTS

	Page No.
Contents	
Certificate	
Preface	
Abbreviation	
List of Tables & List of Charts	
Map	
Chapter-I	1-6
Conceptual Framework of Panchayati Raj Institutions	
Notes and References	7
Chapter –II	8-12
The Present Study	
Notes and References	13
Chapter –III	14-16
An Evolutionary Perspective of Panchayati Raj Institutions	
Notes and References	17
Chapter-IV	18-26
Organisational Structures of Panchayati Raj Institutions	
Notes and References	27
Chapter –V	28-34
Functioning of Constitutional Gaon Panchayats	
Notes and References	35
Chapter –VI	36-42
The Role of Gaon Sabha	

Notes and References	43
Chapter- VII	44-59
The Participatory role of the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Caste People at Constitutional Gaon Panchayats	
Notes and References	60
Chapter-VIII	61-70
Conclusion	
Notes and References	71
Photo Graphs of Panchayat Activities	72-76
Appendix	77-82
Bibliography	83-85

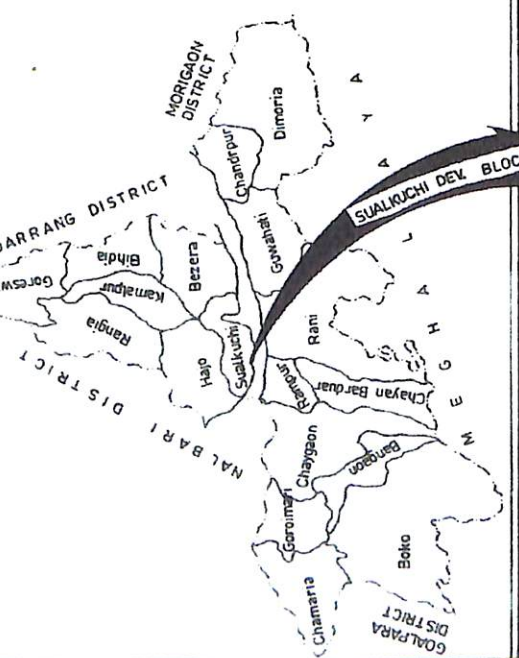
ABBREVIATION

AGP	Assam Gana Parishas
APs	Anchalik Panchayats
BDO	Block Development Officer
CDP	Community Development Projects
DPC	District Planning Committee
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency
GPs	Gaon Panchayats
HSLC	High School Leaving Certificate
HSSLC	Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate
IAY	Indira Awaas Yojana
IWDP Programme	Integrated West Land Development
JE	Junior Engineer
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MLA	Member of Legislative Assembly
MP	Member of Parliament
NES	National Extension Service
NGO	Non Government Organisation
PMGSY	Pradhan Mantri Gramin Sadak Yojana
PRIs	Panchayati Raj Institutions
RPRS	Raijor Padulit Raijor Sarkar
SCs	Scheduled Castes
SGRY	Sampurna Gramin Rozgar Yojana
STs	Scheduled Tribes
ZPs	Zilla Parishad

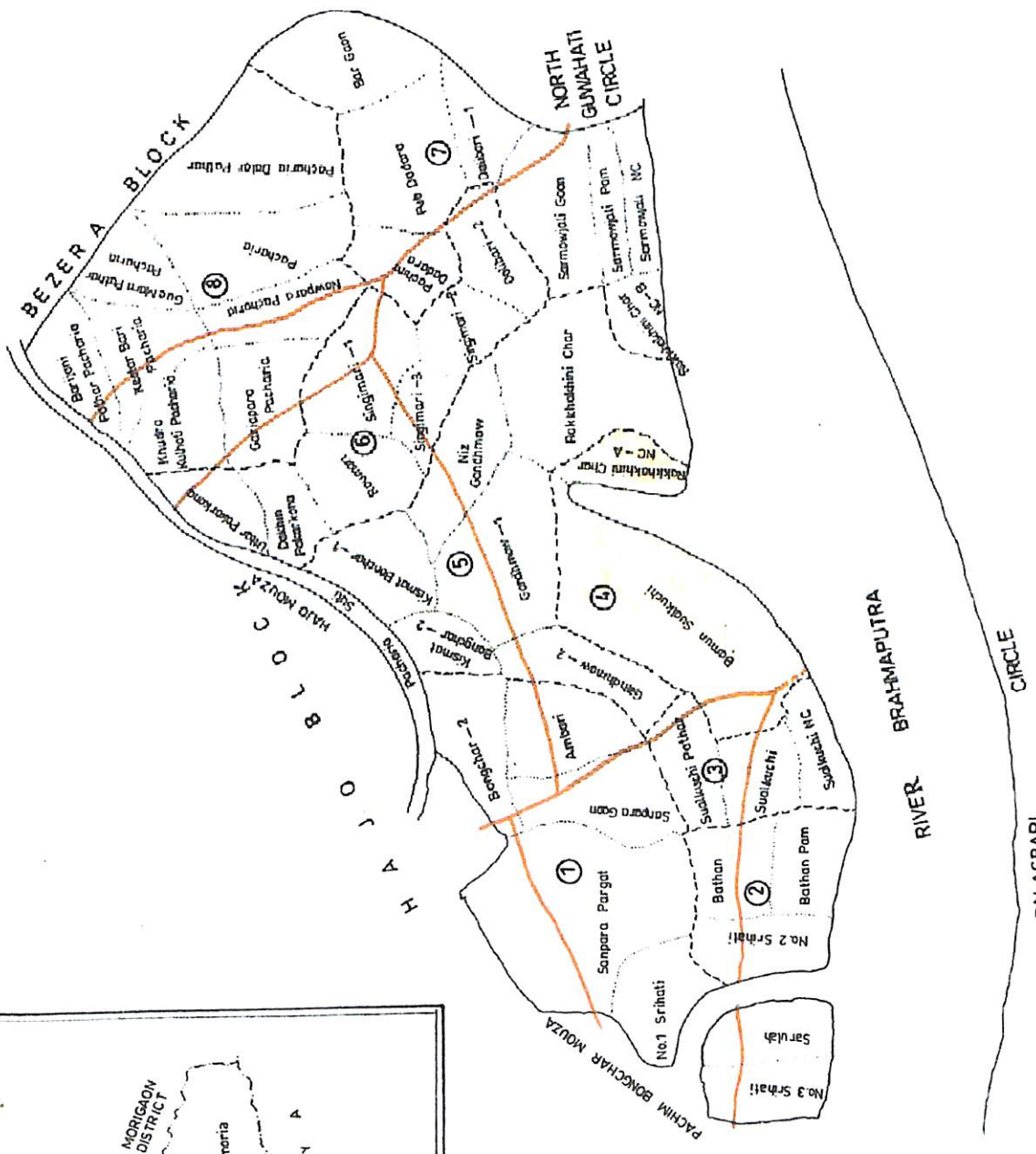
LIST OF TABLES AND CHARTS

Sl.No.		Page No.
1.	The GP wise Gaon Sabha members	26
2.	The year wise implementation of number of schemes under IAY within the study area	33
3.	The present/absent records of the Gaon Sabha members at its Meeting	39
4.	The GP wise representation of the SC/ST representatives at the GPs of the study area	46
5.	Occupational Status of the SC/ST representatives of the GPs (Table with pie chart)	48
6.	Distribution of SC/ST representatives of the GPs by Household Income (Table with Column Graph)	49-50
7.	Educational Status of SC/ST representatives of the GPs (Table with Pie Chart)	51
8.	Participation of the SC/ST GP representatives in Social Organisation (Table with Pie Chart)	52
9.	Political Affiliation of the SC/ST GP representative s (Table with Pie Chart)	53

KAMRUP DISTRICT



SUALKUCHI DEVELOPMENT BLOCK
GAON PANCHAYATWISE DISTRIBUTION OF VILLAGES



INDEX

	NATIONAL BOUNDARY
	STATE BOUNDARY
	DISTRICT BOUNDARY
	DEV. BLOCK BOUNDARY
	G.P. BOUNDARY
	VILLAGE BOUNDARY
	ROAD
	RIVER
	NAME OF THE GAON PANCHAYATS

1. Bongchar GP
2. Pachim Sualkuchi GP
3. Madhya Sualkuchi GP
4. Pub Sualkuchi GP
5. Gandhmow GP
6. Singimari GP
7. Dadara GP
8. Pacharia GP

26° 12' N

26° 00' N

26° 6' N

91° 33' E

91° 30' E

91° 28' E

CHAPTER-I

Conceptual Framework of Panchayati Raj Institutions:

Panchayats have been an integral part of the rural cultural heritage. They can be traced as far as the Vedic age.¹ The term Panchayati Raj probably used in India incorporates two words- 'Panchayat' and 'Raj'. 'Panchayat' means a group of 'panches' who were the representative leaders of the rural people. The word 'Raj' on the other hand means 'Government'. In this sense, the term Panchayati Raj means, the Government of the people's representative leaders. They are elected by the villagers, village councils and officials in India. So; it is an expression of the essence of the democracy. The word 'panch' reflects the democratic ideals or spirit inherent in the concept of Panchayati Raj.² In fact, the idea of decentralization of power owes its origin in India to the thought of Mahatma Gandhi. The term decentralization on the other hand was christened by Jawharlal Nehru as "Panchayati Raj"³.

Mahatma Gandhi's Concept of Panchayati Raj:

Mahatma Gandhi's Concept of Panchayati Raj is the only way to the real village Swaraj. It represents a system by which the numerous village republics of India were governed. Gandhi believed that the Panchayati Raj is a catalytic agent as well as a major segment of rural development. It analyses the relevant problems of functions, finances, management and organization of programmes initiated to improve the living condition of the rural people. Besides, Gandhi's Panchayat is not a mere local government within the framework of a representative government. It is a way of life, a new pattern for structuring the society, economy as well as the polity. At the centre of this pattern lies the dream of individual freedom - freedom from social inequalities, freedom from economic exploitation and freedom from undue interference of political authority.⁴

The constitutional scheme and the Panchayats:

The concept of Panchayat was forgotten at the time of making of the constitution. The Panchayat got a place in the Directive Principles of State Policy through Article 40 only as an afterthought and it had no place in the enforceable part of the constitution. Article 40 of the constitution directs the state government to "organise village Panchayats and endow them with such power and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self governments".⁵

Conceptual dimensions of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Report:

The first major step towards establishing Panchayats and endowing them with authority and responsibility was taken in the late fifties. The main task of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was to study the functioning of the Community Development Projects (CDP) and National Extension Service (NES). The committee approached the issue of what it termed as "Democratic Decentralization" from the practical need for CDP and NES Work to evoke popular initiatives. The committee defines that decentralization is the process whereby the government divests itself completely of certain duties and responsibilities and devolves them on to some other authority. It also emphasized that 'Development' cannot progress without responsibility and power. Community Development can be real when the community understands its problems. Panchayati Raj extends to establish strong linkages between villages, taluks and districts. The spirit of Panchayati Raj is to emerge as a system of democratic local government, discharging all functions related to integrated rural development.⁶

Conceptual dimensions of Asoka Mehta Committee Report:

The Asoka Mehta Committee which submitted its report in 1978 took a holistic view regarding the survival of Panchayats. The Committee noted that it was essential to decentralize the planning process and development activities. Without people's participation, development efforts would become unfruitful. People needed appropriate fora to get involved in the process of change and growth. Of course, economic development could not capture the full significance of human development. Besides, the community's future was a basic human right and realization of this right was an inalienable part of development. An institution like Panchayat has the potentiality to fulfil these needs of development. Thus, the Panchayat has an instrumental value as a vehicle of development. The Committee permitted participation of political parties in the Panchayat Election. It brought the Panchayat to the main stream of the nation's political system.⁷

Jayaprakash Narayan's Concept of Panchayati Raj:

Jayaprakash Narayan was of the opinion that the self-governing village communities were the foundation stone of ancient Indian polity. Their strength came from within and not from outside. He stated that rationale of decentralized polity flows from the twin principles of least government and communitarian society.⁸ The functions of Panchayats in such a system cannot be restricted to

minor municipal activities. Each level of Panchayats must be allowed to all such functions with complete autonomy as are possible to be done at that level. According to him, the Indian will have five level of government at the centre, states and three levels of the Panchayat. In such a system, there is no hierarchy and none is superior or subordinate. He laid emphasis for strengthening the Gaon Panchayat by devolving adequate power and resources to this body. This is necessary because it is only in Gaon Panchayats that the people can get a taste of direct democracy. Besides, he laid emphasis on effective control over the civil servants by the Panchayats.⁸

E.M.S. Namboodiripad's concept of Panchayati Raj:

E.M.S. Namboodiripad, a member of the Asoka Mehta Committee was taking a "four-pillar democracy". It meant that the centre, states, districts and the lower levels of administration would be decentralized. He viewed that the District Council and the Panchayats or the Urban Councils would have autonomy in respect of subjects transferred to these bodies. Thus he made a strong plea for democratizing all the levels from which state power is exercised.⁹

Rajni Kothari's theoretical concept of Panchayati Raj:

Rajni Kothari advocates decentralized governance with Panchayats constituting the third layer of government. He argues for transferring real autonomy at the state, district and the lower level of the government. He also recommends devolution of many functions as are feasible to the Panchayats. Kothari views that democracy has a political and a social dimension as well. He wants to build the foundation of the democratic edifice through activation and development of an infrastructure of autonomous and self-governing group capable of influencing the process of political decision making. The essence of the system is the diffusion of the decision-making power of the state among decentralized governmental institutions and continuous interaction between such centres and people's groups associations or fora. Thus, its focus is not limited to the political state; its stress is on organizing the whole society on democratic principles. Kothari has christened this concept as "decentralized democracy".¹⁰

Conceptual dimensions of the 73rd Amendment:

The 73rd Amendment provides constitutional status to the Panchayats. Article 243G provides that state legislations should "endow the Panchayats with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as institutions of self-government". The literal meaning of self-government is "government without outside interference" or "government which has autonomy".¹¹

To sum up, the unfinished agenda of decentralization is quite long. The primary objective of Panchayati Raj is to establish an integrated structure of local democratic bodies linking the village within the district and to make the Village Panchayat a unit of planning and execution of all schemes of rural development. Panchayati Raj aims at developing the initiative of the local people and creates conditions for maximum popular participation. It seeks to develop sound leadership at all levels in the district necessary for success of democratic institutions. It also seeks to provide at the instance of Panchayati Raj bodies a development oriented and efficient administration.

Democratic Decentralization: Meaning and importance:

The term "democratic decentralization" has been described in India as "functional democracy", "grass-root democracy", "building from below", "Panchayati Raj" etc. The term 'democracy' literally means the rule of the people. Apart from being a way of life, it is a form of government based on the fundamental assumption of equality of all individuals and their equal rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Democracy involves a large number of people in the decision-making process. At the lower levels, all the adults are directly associated with decision making. This type of democracy is described as "participatory democracy". At the higher strata, the democratically elected people's representatives take decisions on behalf of their constituents. This type of democracy is described as "representative democracy".

The concept of democratic decentralization implies the devolution of sizeable powers and responsibilities by the central government through properly enacted legislative measure to the democratically created territorial units. Under this arrangement, the units of local government enjoy more or less complete autonomy within the territorial and functional jurisdiction. ¹²

Basic objectives of democratic decentralization:

- In India, the objectives of democratic decentralization are broader and much deeper. These objectives have to create a far reaching result in the attitude, behaviour, performance and life style of the people in the rural area. These objectives are –
- Deepening of democracy
- Ensures and enlisting people's participation
- More responsibilities may be entrusted to the people
- Reduction of government structure is possible
- Harnessing the human energy
- Administering development and social justice

- Planning from below
- Building the capacity of the people .¹³

Thus, democratic decentralization was accepted as the key to the planning process. Efforts have been made from time to time to activate the system of Panchayati Raj so that these would be able to facilitate participatory process at the grass-root level bodies in order to meet the local needs aspirations of the rural masses in general and poor in particular. So, the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, 1992 was passed for improving the working of the Panchayati Raj.

People's Participation:

The concept of 'Participation' has long been recognized as the central theme of democratic governance. Here, citizens enjoy the right to participate in governance. Political Participation is key to the success of democracy and it can be defined as "those activities of citizens that attempt to influence the structure of the government, the selection of government authorities or the policies of government". In fact, in the liberal democratic country, people are expected to participate only by expressing their mandate and the scope of participation ends with the electoral process. This view of people's participation minimizes the scope of the concept only people's involvement with the decision making process of the government.¹⁴

People's participation in broad sense means participation of people both men and women at all stages of programme, viz planning, decision making, formulation, implementation, sharing the benefits of development, monitoring and evaluation. Political participation in the democratic perspective means those activities that have "the intent or effect of influencing governmental actions- either directly by the making or implementations of public policy or indirectly by influencing the selection of people who make those policies".¹⁵

Popular participation on the otherhand refers to the activities of those who engage in development programmes as voluntary workers, either full time or part time. So, Participation cannot be imposed on the people from above. In this regard, the 'will' of the people to participate is essential. Besides, qualitative participation is more important than the quantitative one. Moreover, the "Democratic Leadership Approach" must be used to encourage people's participation. Therefore, the loyalty towards popular participation in governance at the local level has been strengthened through the policies of positive action. In this regard, the provisions of reservation for the Scheduled Castes and the

Scheduled Tribes and Women (Art.243D) have given them an opportunity to participate in the decision making process.¹⁶

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Sharma Mukesh (2002): Panchayati Raj System and Empowerment, Jaipur, Surabhi Publications, P-23
2. Deka Jogesh(2004): Panchayat and Rural Development in Assam: A Structural and Functional Analysis(an unpublished thesis). P-242
3. Ghosh Buddhadeb(2000): Panchayati Raj – Evolution of the concept, New Delhi : Institute of Social Sciences. P-1
4. The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,Vol-90, the Publication Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. Of India(1984), P-527
5. Bakshi P.M.(Ed.),(2008): The Constitution of India ,Art-40, Universal Law Publishing Co.,Delhi,P-88
6. Opcit. Ghosh Buddhadeb.P-13, P-14
7. Ibid.P-16, P-20
8. Narayan Jayaprakash(1978): Towards Total Revolution, India and her problems,(Ed) by Brahmanand Popular Prakashan,Bombay,Vol.3, P-87, P-88
9. Opcit.Ghosh Buddhadeb.P-22, P-23
10. Ibid. P-28, P-29
11. Ibid.P-34, P-35
12. South Asian Journal of Socio-political Studies, Vol.1, No.2, January-June,2001
13. Ibid.
14. Dey Paramita (2012): Critical Mass, women Leadership in Rural Assam, Northern Book Centre , New Delghi,P-14,P-15
15. Joyce K.M. (1998): "Community Structure and Political Participation", Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston Marriott Copley Place and Sheraton Boston Hotel and Towers , September, P-3
16. Opcit. Dey Paramita.P-17,P-18

CHAPTER –II

The Present Study:

A brief Profile of Sualkuchi Development Block:

The Sualkuchi Development Block is located from 20° 12' N to 20° 10' N and from 91° 28' E to 91° 32' E. The block is bounded by Hajo Mouza on the North, Guwahati Circle on the East, by Palashbari Circle on the South and by Pachim Bansar Mouza on the West. It is spread over an area of 90.74 sq. Kms. (as per 1991 census). The Sualkuchi Development Block comprises 44 revenue villages.

(Source of data: The Office of the Sualkuchi Development Block)

According to the Population Census, 2001 the total population of Sualkuchi Development Block has 81733 out of which male and female population stood at 50.7 percent and 49.3 percent respectively. Besides, out of total population, General Caste people constitute 81.6 percent, Scheduled Castes 15.2 percent and Scheduled Tribes 2.6 percent respectively. According to data collected from the Office of the Sualkuchi Development Block, the literacy rate of the Block is 74 percent. Nevertheless, the Sualkuchi Development Block has got heterogeneous character. Further, within the area of Sualkuchi Development Block, the famous silk cottage industry village of Assam, Sualkuchi is situated and it covers three Gaon Panchayats namely-Madhya Sualkuchi, Pub Sualkuchi and Paschim Sualkuchi. The people of these areas have a semi-urban life style. Sualkuchi village has developed into a busy centre of weaving pat (mulberry silk) and muga (muga silk) fabrics. It has emerged as the only silk village of Assam. Sualkuchi is famous for its high quality of hand woven pat and muga fabrics. In Sualkuchi village, about 90 percent of the families are involved in weaving.¹ Thus; these have made the study area more significant.

Scope of the Study:

The 73rd Constitution Amendment has brought a revolutionary change towards the Rural Local -Self Government of India. The radical nature of the 73rd Amendment Act of 1992 lies in its provisions to confer Panchayats constitutional status with powers and fiscal autonomy in order to function as self-governing units. Thus, the third generation of Panchayati Raj System has come into existence in the country. The Constitution empowers the government to provide special benefits and preference to the previously disadvantaged section of

population. In fact, the 73rd Constitution Amendment provides an opportunity to the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) population in the decision making process through the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs). Article 243D of the Constitution provides for reservation of seats in the PRIs at all levels. Besides, one-third of such reserved seat shall be allocated for the women of the SCs and the STs. As socio-economically as well as politico-administratively backward classes of the society, these disadvantaged groups of people have got an opportunity to take part in the decision making process, implementation of development project as well as the participation of sharing the benefits of development.

The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 was passed in conformity with provision of the 73rd Constitution Amendment. This Act provides reservation for the SCs and STs in the PRIs. After the enactment of the constitutional mandate, the Assam Panchayat Election was held in 2001. Accordingly, the Constitutional PRIs have been functioning in Assam since May, 2002. Therefore, along with other classes, people belonging to the SC and the ST have got chance to participate in the PRIs.

(Source of data: The Office of the Guwahati ZP)

Participation we mean, direct involvement of the people. But, the so called representatives of the people are most likely to represent the rich rather than the interest of the poor majority and downtrodden section. However, to understand the social system, equitable participation of the poor in the process of development can be regarded as a gradual process. The process can be accelerate only when the poor and disadvantaged classes becomes conscious of their right and privileged and build up faith and confidence in them through united strength to achieve justice for themselves in sharing of benefits of development.

Significance of the Study:

Reservation of seats for the SCs and the STs in proportion to their population is based on the view of employment of them in all spheres providing them the opportunity to participate in the administration of the rural local government. However, few social scientists, academicians and administrators are raising doubts on the effective participation or rural disadvantaged section in the PRIs considering their low level of education, lack of awareness and interest in politics and social services and the traditional social norms and values in the rural area. Therefore, the present study is conducted to ascertain the participation of the SCs and the STs in the Gaon Panchayats and the Gaon

Sabhas .These two tiers are the lower tiers of the PRIs and these can be considered as real platform for the participation of disadvantaged section like the SCs and the STs.

Review of the Literatures:

In the following, some selected literatures have been reviewed in order to give a proper orientation and perspective to the present work:

Challenges of the 21st Century

By Mohan Dharia

The Hindu, dated 11-8-1999

In his article, "Challenges of the 21st Century", Mohan Dharia, highlighted that the standard of our democratic institutions from Parliament to the Gram Panchayat has gone down. Sincere efforts will be necessary to reverse the situation. It will be possible only if the aspirations of various regions or states are recognised and power adequately decentralized.

Strategy of working with rural people (1992)

By A.K.Muniyandi

Gandhi Marg, Vol. XLI.No.2 ,PP.332-24

In his book, "Strategy of working with Rural People", A.K. Muniyandi stresses that the basic approach of the Gandhian model of development requires active involvement and participation of man, building his own destiny. In his opinion, this is possible if some of us belonging to the so called rich and middle class voluntarily, instead of drifting towards consumerism are willing to sacrifice and share out pleasures in the interest of our downtrodden of our society. For rural India, time is running out and it must adopt strategies and methods to transform the socio-economic life of people to suit Indian ingenuity and culture. Integrated development sets forth a strategy in which participation by all is both the means and ends.

Local Governance in India, Ideas, challenges and Strategies (2007),

By T.M. Joseph(Ed.)

Concept Publishing Company, New Deldhi.

This book makes an attempt to highlight the performance appraisal of the local governance mechanism in the first ten years of its mandatory existence. It

throws light on the ideas behind these institutions, the challenges they face and the strategies to chain them. The book gives its attention on how local governance mechanism can bring in social and economic development at the grassroots level. In his book, George Mathew talks about how the PRIs can foster human rights. He feels that caste system in the major source of human violation in the society and there has been a sharp increase in violent manifestation of casteism in local communities ever since the local government system got strengthen through the constitutional amendments. This book also highlights that the new paradigm makes a shift from the traditional state sponsored development approach to the new community centric development. In his writings, Pradip Narayan focuses for the background of economic globalization. It encourages a co-operation based relationship between the states and the multinational companies in the developing countries for achieving the goals of economic growth and stability. This book also focuses on E-governance at the grassroots, role of Panchayat and bureaucracy in the Rural Development and women and political participation.

Objectives of the Study:

The study is undertaken with a view to evaluate the participatory role the Scheduled Castes and the scheduled Tribes people at Constitutional Gaon

Panchayats. For this purpose, the following broad objectives have been chosen:

- To examine whether the provisions of the Panchayat Act has been actually implemented.
- To assess the socio-economic background of the SC and the ST elected representatives and the members of the Gaon Sabhas.
- To evaluate whether the SCs and the STs People are actually involved in the decision making, implementation and monitoring the development programmes and projects and participation in sharing the benefits of development.
- To find out the reason behind the involvement of the SCs and the STs in the Panchayats whether they have entered under pressure of persuasion or on their will.
- To examine the attitudes of the higher castes of the society towards the participation of the SCs and STs in this institutions.
- To suggest measures for responsive PRIs that enables to empower the SCs and the STs through the PRIs.

The role of sociological factors like caste, class, educational status etc. on participation of the SCs and the STs will also take into consideration in the course of the study.

Methodology:

The study is based on fieldwork and as such various field methodologies such as observation and interview method is used to procure data from the field. The secondary sources are both published and unpublished works and all other information available from the government records etc. For the interview method, a carefully set open ended questionnaire is utilized. The total number of respondents from the eight GPs including the elected representatives is taken 400 where 200 each belong to the General and the SC/ST respectively. Besides 50 respondents (25 General and 25 SC/ST) are selected from two randomly chosen wards of each GP on the basis of population pattern. We have a comprehensive list of well defined target population so that the sampling error can be reduced.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. The Weaver of Sualkuchi, the Silk town of Assam, study conducted by OKDID, Guwahati, 2000 ,P-1
2. Bakshi P.M.(Ed.),(2008) : The Constitution of India, universal Law Publishing Co. Pvt., Delhi 8th edition,
3. The Assam State Panchayat Election Notification Order(Sec 29/2001/107), November,19, 2001
4. Baluchamy S.(2004):Panchayati Raj Institutions, A Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1st edition
5. Bhattacharya Moitree: Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, Democratic Decentralization of Democratic Centralization, Manak Publications Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi,1st edition
6. Ghosh B.K.(Ed.),(2004),:The Assam Panchayat Act ,1994,Assam Law House, Guwahati,4th edition
7. Joseph T.M.(Ed.),(2007), Local Government in India, Ideas, Challenges and Strategies, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi,1st edition.
8. Census Report ,2001

CHAPTER-- III

An evolutionary Perspective of the PRIs in India with special reference to Assam:

Panchayati Raj in India has a long history although their concepts and structure have undergone changes over time¹. During the British regime, the Panchayat lost their autonomy. The traditional Caste Panchayats became ineffective because of the competition offered by the British Courts of Justice. When the constitution of India was being framed, Village Panchayats or any Panchayats at a higher level were not made a mandatory part of the politico-administrative set up. Nevertheless, the Government of India put emphasis on building up alternative institutions for implementing its first major programme of rural development in the post independence period, is the Community Development Programme (CDP). This programme was launched on 2nd October, 1952. Each Community Development Block was headed by a Block Development Officer. This programme brought in several schemes for socio-economic development of the village. The reliance was on government schemes with people's participation.

The second institution created was National Extension Service (NES) launched in 1953. The NES blocks were carved out as the lowest administrative units, each comprising 300 villages and functioning under the supervision of a Block Development Officer. Extension Officers were also posted in the blocks to provide technical guidance to small farmers and entrepreneurs. But, both these programmes failed to achieve the desired results in terms of evoking popular participation.

On 16 January 1957, Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was appointed to review the working of the CDP and NES. The main recommendation of the Mehta Committee were- (a) A three tier system of Panchayati Raj from the village to the district level should be created. (b) There should be a genuine transfer of power to these institutions. (c) Adequate resources should be transferred to these bodies. (d) All development schemes at these levels should be channelled through this Panchayati Raj Institutions.² By 1959, all the states had passed Panchayat Acts and by the mid 1960's, Panchayats had reached all parts of the country. More than 2, 17,300 Village Panchayats, covering over 96 percent of the 5, 79,000 inhabited villagers and 92 percent of the rural population had been established. Thus the first generation of came into existence.

The appointment of the Asoka Mehta Committee in 1977 marked a turning point in the concept and practice of the Panchayati Raj. The Committee recommended for creation of a two-tier system of Panchayati Raj with a Zilla Parishad at the district level and below it the Mandal Panchayat having a population of 15,000 to 20,000. That was the second generation of Panchayat in India.

The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution which came into force on 24 April, 1993 brought about a fundamental change in the realm of the local self – government as well as in the federal character of the country. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment guarantees the basic essential features including regular elections, reservation of Scheduled Castes , Scheduled Tribes and women and devolution of financial and administrative powers.³ Thus, these, Amendment generated a great expectation. It was considered as radical in nature, for it promised institution of a third stratum of government at the local level.⁴

Panchayati Raj in Assam:

The Assam Rural Panchayat Act of 1948, the first legislation on Panchayats, provided for a two tier system with Panchayats at the village level and Rural Panchayats at the Revenue Mouza level. Under limitation in the provision was that only five Primary Panchayats could be established in any Rural Panchayats. Besides, the Act failed to served the village satisfactorily.⁵ The Government Committee appointed in 1953 recommended that Panchayats should be established throughout Rural Assam in a period of five years and that the total number of Primary Panchayats in Panchayat area rose from five to fifteen.⁶

The Assam Panchayati Raj Act of 1959 provided for establishment of Mahkuma Parishad, Anchalik Panchayat and Gaon Panchayat in rural areas of Assam. There existed 2605 Gaon Panchayats, 121 Anchalik Panchayats and 20 Mahakuma Parishads. Thus, democratic decentralization as recorded by the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee was introduced in Assam.

A two-tier system of Panchayati Raj was re- introduced under the Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1972.⁷ The number of Gaon Panchayats was 714 and Mahkuma Parishad 32 .⁸

The Provisions of Assam Panchayati Raj Act, 1972 were not adequate to provide sound infrastructure relating to rural development and rural reconstruction. Of course, this Act provided all powers to the Mahkuma Parishad.

But the Gaon Panchayats were not actually involved in the rural development activities.⁹

The Assam Principal Act of 1990 stated that if in the administrative area of the Panchayat, the number of population of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (plains) is 33 percent or more than the total population; the president of the Gaon Panchayat must be elected from amongst the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Besides, 30 percent of the total number of seats of the Panchayat must be reserved for women.¹⁰

The Panchayat elections were held in Assam in February 1992 after a long gap of 13 years. This election may be considered as a landmark in the history of Panchayati Raj in Assam. The Congress Government delimited the administrative area of Panchayat consisting of one Gaon Panchayat for every 6000 to 10000 people and thus increased the number of Gaon Panchayats from 714 to 2486. Besides, for the first time in the history of local self-government in Assam, Tea Gardens have been included in 1992 within the Gaon Panchayat area.

The Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 was passed in conformity with the 73rd Constitution Amendment Act, 1992. This Act extends to all the rural areas of Assam except Karbi Anglong and North Kacher, the two autonomous districts under the sixth schedule area of the constitution. The Assam Panchayat (Constitution) Rules, 1995 came to be enforced upon the introduction to the three-tier system of Panchayati Raj. The rules also related to conduct of Panchayat elections, election of members to represent District Planning Committee, delimitation of constituencies of Panchayat areas, determination of constituencies reserved for the SC/ST and for women and allied matters.¹¹

In the Act of 1994, provisions for delegated legislation are made. The Act also provides for the constitution of the Gaon Sabha which reflects people's voice. Mahkuma Parishad is replaced by Zilla Parishad and Sub-divisional Planning and Development Council is replaced by District Planning Committee. Besides, the Act introduced provisions for the establishment and constitution of Finance Commission and State Panchayat Election commission.¹²

In 1996, the AGP government dissolved all Rural Bodies on 4th April, 1997. Although elections should have been held within six months as per the relevant provision in the constitution, these have not been held till 2001.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. The working of Panchayats in Assam with special reference to the role of Women Representatives (A Case Study of Nalbari District). Study sponsored by the Rastriya Gramin Vikash Nidhi, Guwahati and the Indian Institute of Social Science Social Science, New Delhi
2. Sharma Mukesh (2002): Panchayati Raj System and Empowerment, Surabhi Publication, Jaipur, 1st publishes, P-139
3. Narang A.S. (2000): Indian Government and Politics, New Delhi: Gitanjali Publishing House, P-298
4. Consultation Paper on the Working of the Constitutional Provisions (Part-IX)
for Decentralization of Panchayats (2001), New Delhi, P-1
5. Deke Jogesh (2004): Panchayat and Rural Development Department in Assam: A Structural and Functional Analysis ((Unpublished thesis), P-255
6. Status of Panchayati Raj in the State and Union Territories published for Institute of Social Sciences, Concept Publishing Company, 2000, P-10
7. Opcit. The working of Panchayats in Assam P-10
8. Opcit. Deke Jogesh ((Unpublished thesis), P-256
9. Opcit, The working of Panchayats in Assam P-11
10. Opcit. Deke Jogesh ((Unpublished thesis), P-257
11. Opcit, Status of Panchayati Raj.....2000, P-72
12. Ibid, P-74



CHAPTER—IV

Organizational Structure of Panchayati Raj Institutions

The first generation of Panchayati Raj Institutions started with the recommendation of Balwant Rai Mehta Committee. The Committee recommended three tiers of Panchayati Raj Institutions- Gaon Panchayat, Block Samiti and Zilla Parishad. These three tiers organically linked with each other. Since the block was the pivot of development programme, hence the Committee suggested that the Panchayat Samiti should be given statutory status. It should be an elective body and it has comprehensive functions with adequate financial resources. It should have also executive authority to implement the programmes. The Zilla Parishad (ZP) should be a purely coordinative and advisory body having no executive authority. This generation of Panchayat Bodies meant to ensure participation in development.¹

The second generation of Panchayati Raj started with the recommendation of the Asoka Mehta Committee. This Committee submitted its report in 1978 recommending for creation of a two-tier system of Panchayati Raj. It also recommended that Panchayat elections must be held at regular intervals. Thus, the Panchayats emerged from a development organization at the local level into a political institution.

The third generation of Panchayati Raj Institutions came into existence from 1993 as result of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. The main provisions of this Act can be grouped under two categories: mandatory and voluntary. Under the first category the following provisions are included:

- Organisation of the Gaon Sabha.
- Creation of three-tier Panchayati Raj Structure at the district, block and village level.
- Filling of all post at all levels (with two exceptions) by direct elections.
- Indirect election to the post of chairman at the intermediate and open tiers.
- Reservation of seats for the SC/ST in the Panchayats (chairman and members) in proportion to their population.
- Reservation for women in Panchayats (chairman and members) up to 1/3rd seats.
- Creation of the State Election Commission to conduct election to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

- Fixing the tenure of Panchayati Raj Institutions at five years and if dissolved earlier, holding fresh elections within six months.
- Setting up a State Finance Commission every five years to review the financial position of the Panchayati Raj Institutions of each state.

The following provisions are included under voluntary category:

- Giving the voting right to the members of the union and state legislature in these bodies.
- Providing reservation for backward classes.
- Giving the Panchayati Raj Institutions financial powers in relation to taxes, levies, fees etc.
- Making the Panchayats autonomous bodies.
- Devolution of powers to the Panchayat Bodies to perform some or all of the functions suggested in the Eleventh Schedule added to the constitution through the 73rd Amendment and prepare frames for economic development of the voluntary provisions has been left to the 'will' of the state.²

Thus, the 73rd Constitutional Amendment on Panchayati Raj provides Constitutional guarantee to basic essential features including regular elections, reservations for SCs, STs and women and devolution of financial and administrative powers.³

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 defines the Panchayat as an institution of self-government. Three tiers of the PRI are –

Gaon Panchayat

Anchalik Panchayat

Zilla Parishad

Therefore, a Panchayat shall be constituted at the village, block and district levels.

The Act of 1992 provides for reservation of seats in Panchayats at all levels for SCs, STs and women. The seats to be reserved for the SCs and the STs in each Panchayat shall be in proportion to their respective population in the area of that Panchayat. One-third of such reserved seats shall be allotted for the women of SCs and STs. Besides, one-third of the total number of directly elected seats shall be reserved for women. More over; one-third of the offices of the chair person shall be reserved for women. Similarly, the offices of the presidents of the Panchayats at different level shall be reserved for the SCs and STs, but

the number of such reserved offices shall be in proportion to their respective populations.⁴

Article (243-I) of the constitution empowers the Governor of a state to appoint a Finance Commission within one year of this appointment and after every five years thereafter, to review the financial position of the Panchayats and to make recommendations to the Governor regarding the principles to govern. The qualifications of the members of the Finance Commission and the manner of their appointment shall be laid down by the state legislature.

Article 243 ZD of the constitution (inserted by the 74th Constitution Amendment) provides for constitution of District Planning Committee by the state governments in every district. But it is applicable to Panchayati Raj Institution also. The District Planning Committees are expected to consolidate the plans prepared by the Panchayats and Municipalities in the district and on their basis formulate a draft development plan for the district as a whole.⁵

The main features of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 show that the Act is mainly an enabling and empowering one. It provides definite constitutional status and seeks to provide a uniform pattern and status to the Panchayats. The reservation for SCs, STs and women in Panchayats as well as legal status to the Gaon Sabha is however likely to bring a far-reaching change in the institution of Panchayats. Besides, the provision for the State Election Commission and State Finance Commission will certainly provide the much needed stability to the Panchayat in the states. Given the socio-economic background of our rural areas, these provisions cannot be expected to cause sudden miracles. Manipulations and dominations by the vested interested still continue in a great majority of them. At the same time, it will certainly start a process of qualitative change towards more satisfactory functioning of the Panchayats.⁶

Structural Pattern of Panchayati Raj in Assam:

The Assam State Legislative Assembly enacted the Assam Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 in conformity with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1992. A three-tier system of Panchayati Raj has been provided to cover the rural areas, except Karbi Anglong and North Cachar covered by the six schedule of the constitution. A five –year term was fixed for the Panchayat Bodies comprising the Gaon Panchayats at the bottom, Anchalik Panchayats at the intermediate and Zilla Parishad at the top level. The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 provides that the Gaon Sabha shall consist of persons registered in electoral rolls relating to a village or a group of villages comprised within the

area of the Gaon Panchayat.⁷ The Act makes it mandatory for the Gaon Sabha to meet in every three months to make recommendations and suggestions to the Gaon Panchayats on the development programmes to be undertaken. The Act provides a Gaon Panchayat consisting of ten directly elected members and one directly elected president. The vice president is to be elected from amongst the members in the first meeting of the Gaon Panchayat. The Act fulfils all the provisions regarding elections and reservation of seats for women, the SCs and the STs.⁸ The Act has also made it mandatory for the Gaon Panchayat to constitute three standing committee – development Committee, Social Welfare Committee by election amongst the elected members. Besides the elected members, the Act has authorized the Gaon Panchayats to co-opt to each standing committee, mahila samiti and other such civil society organizations without the right to vote.⁹

The Act provides an Anchalik Panchayat for each Development Block to be constituted by the directly elected members from the territorial constituencies of the Gaon Panchayats, the presidents of the Gaon Panchayats and the MLA and the MP representing constituencies. Every such member has right to vote, whether or not chosen by direct election. However, only the directly elected members of the Anchalik Panchayat are given the right to elect the president and the vice-president from amongst themselves in the first meeting of the Anchalik Panchayat. The Act fulfils all the constitutional provisions regarding election, reservation of seats for women, the SCs and the STs in the Anchalik Panchayats.¹⁰

It is also mandatory for the Anchalik Panchayat to constitute three standing committee—General Standing Committee, Finance, Audit and Planning Committee, and Social Justice Committee to be constituted by the members of the Anchalik Panchayat for amongst themselves.

The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 provides a Zilla Parishad to each district. The Zilla Parishad is constituted by the members directly elected from the territorial constituencies of the district, the president of the Anchalik Panchayats and the MLA and the MP representing a part of whole of the district, which constituencies lay within the district. All the members have the right to vote. However, the president and the vice-president of all the Zilla Parishad are to be elected by the directly elected members of the Zilla Parishad from amongst themselves.¹¹

The Zilla Parishad is provided with four standing committees—General Standing Committee, Finance and Audit Committee, the Social Justice Committee and the Planning and Development Committee.¹²

The Act made provision for constituting the District Planning Committee (DPC) for each district. A DPC is to be consisted of the MLA and the MP representing the whole or part of the district, the president of the Zilla Parishad, the Mayor or the Chairperson of the Municipal Corporation /Municipal Board/ Town Committee as the case may be and not less than two-third of the members of the Zilla Parishad, Councillors of Municipal Corporation of the Municipalities or the town Committees on rotation and in proportion to the rural and the urban population of the district. The president of the Zilla Parishad of the ex-officio chairperson of the District Planning Committee.

After the enactment of the 73rd amendment, the Panchayat Elections held in Assam in January 2001, December 2007 which spilled over to January 2008 and January and February 2013. It witnessed a high level of political participation of the people in the democratic process in the Rural Local –Self Government. The voting percentage of these three Panchayat Elections in Assam is about 70%, 70% (source- www.assamtribune.com) and 65% (zeenews.india.com) respectively. The pattern was more or less similar throughout the state.

In conformity with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, a three-tier structure of Panchayati Raj System has been constituted by holding the Assam Panchayat Election, 2001, 2007 and 2008. As well as 2013. The Zilla Parishads at the district level, the Anchalik Panchayat at the Block level and Gaon Panchayat at the village level have been constituted.

One of the most important and mandatory provisions of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment is to constitute the Gaon Sabhas. Following the constitutional mandate, the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 made the provision for the Gaon Sabhas each consisting of persons registered in the electoral rolls in a village or group of villages within the areas of Gaon Panchayat.¹³

In conformity with the provision of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, the first State Finance Commission was constituted in Assam in June 23, 1995 and it had submitted its report on February 29, 1996.¹⁴ Similarly, the Second State Finance Commission was constituted in April, 18, 2001. Again, in pursuance of Article 243(I) and Article 243(Y) of the India read with the provisions of sections 2(1) of the Finance Commission (Miscellaneous Provision) Act, 1995, the Governor of Assam is pleased to constitute the third Assam State Finance Commission.¹⁵

The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 provides that a Gaon Panchayat shall consist of 10 members. These members are to be directly elected by the voters of the territorial constituencies of the Gaon Panchayat one from each

constituency. No members of seats to be filled up to less than one third of the total members of seats to be filled up by direct election in every Gaon Panchayat shall be reserved for women. Such seat may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in the Gaon Panchayat. Seats shall be reserved for SC and ST in every Panchayat on the basis of their population in the Gaon Panchayat area. The voter of the Gaon Panchayat area shall elect the president of the Gaon Panchayat.¹⁶

For the first time after enactment of the 73rd Amendment Act, the Gaon Panchayats and the Gaon Sabhas under Sualkuchi Anchalik Panchayat were constituted 5 months back of the Assam Panchayat election, 2001. Since then, the eight Constitutional Gaon Panchayats under Sualkuchi Anchalik Panchayats have been working. It is important to be noted here that after the enactment of the Act of 1992, the Constitutional Panchayat Bodies have been constituted for three times in Assam according to the Assam Panchayat Election, 2001, 2007 and 2008 as well as 2013. The Gaon Panchayats under Sualkuchi Anchalik Panchayat have also been constituted and functioned accordingly.

Gaon Panchayats under Sualkuchi Development Block:

Paschim Sualkuchi Gaon Panchayat:

Paschim Sualkuchi Gaon Panchayat is one of the significant Gaon Panchayats under Sualkuchi Anchalik Panchayat. Total SC population of this GP is about 5 percent. The representation of SC elected members against reserved seat is about 40 percent. But, for about 2 percent ST population, no GP member has been elected as GP representatives. But, no representative belonging to SC community is elected as GP representatives against unreserved seat.

(Source of data: The Office of the Paschim Sualkuchi GP)

Madhya Sualkuchi Gaon Panchayat:

In Madhya Sualkuchi Gaon Panchayat, the SC and ST population is about 2.5 percent and about 2 percent respectively. Among the elected members of this Gaon Panchayat, none of them belongs to the SC and the ST community. Moreover, no GP representatives belonging to the SC and ST community is elected as GP members against unreserved seat.

(Source of data : The Office of the Madhya Sualkuchi GP)

Pub Sualkuchi Gaon Panchayat:

In Pub Sualkuchi Gaon Panchayat, the SC and ST population is about 26 percent and about 2 percent respectively. For the 26 percent SC population, the representation of the elected GP members is about 37 percent. Of course, there is no representation from ST community in the G P. Moreover, no GP representatives belonging to the SC and ST have been elected against unreserved seats.

(Source of data: The Office of the Pub Sualkuchi Gaon Panchayat)

Bansar Gaon Panchyat:

In Bansar GP, the SC and ST population is about 2.5 percent and about 3 percent respectively. But no one has been elected as GP member from these communities against reserved as well as unreserved seats.

(Source of data : The Office of the Bansar GP)

Gandhmow Gaon Panchayat:

In Gandhmow Gaon Panchayat, the SC and ST population is about 19 percent and about 6 percent respectively. For the SC and the ST community, about 10 percent GP elected representatives from each community have been representing in the GP. Moreover, no GP representatives belonging to these categories are elected against unreserved seats.

(Source of data: The Office of the Gandhmow GP)

Shingimari Gaon Panchayat:

In Shingimari Gaon Panchayat, the SC population is about 0.5 percent and no ST population are inhabited within the GP area. Due to a few percentage of SC population as well as none from the ST community, no representation has been found from these communities. Even none of the representatives belonging to the SC community, elected as GP representative against the unreserved seat.

(Source of data: The Office of the Shingimari GP)

Dadara Gaon Panchayat:

In Dadara Gaon Panchayat, the SC and ST population is about 6.5 percent and about 12 percent respectively. The elected representatives belonging to the SC community in this GP is about 30 percent. On the other hand, about 10 percent representation has been found from the ST community in Dadara GP. against

the reserved seat. Of course, no representatives belonging to these categories are elected to the GP against unreserved seat.

(Source of data: The Office of the Dadara GP)

Pacharia Gaon Panchayat:

In Pacharia Gaon Panchayat, the SC population is about 1.5 percent only. On the other hand, no ST people have been found in the GP. Due to a few percent of people, no representation has been found in the GP. from these community against the reserved seat. Even, no representatives belonging to the SC and ST communities are elected against the unreserved seat.

(Source of data: The Office of the Pacharia GP)

From the above analysis regarding the representation of the SC and the ST Community in the eight GPs under Sualkuchi Development Block, it can be observed that so far as the representation of this community against the reserved seat is concerned, it is simply satisfactory. But, none of the elected representatives belonging to these categories have been found in the eight GPs against the unreserved seat. This is not an encouraging trend regarding the participation of the SC and ST community in the decision making process of the rural local self government.

In conformity with the 73rd Constitutional Amendment, the Assam Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 has provided for establishment of the Gaon Sabhas. Accordingly, the Gaon Sabhas have been constituted in 8 GPs. The Table-1 indicates the constitution of the Gaon Sabhas under eight Gaon Panchayats of Sualkuchi Anchalik Panchayat.

The Gaon Panchayat wise Gaon Sabha members of the Study area including male and female have shown in the Table –I

Table-I

Sl. No.	Name of GPs	The members of the Gaon Sabhs				
		Total	Male	%Male	Female	%Female
1	Paschim Sualkuchi	6151	3197	51.97	2954	48.02
2	Madhya Sualkuchi	5459	2804	51.36	2655	48.63
3	Pub Sualkuchi	4283	2146	50.1	2137	49.9
4	Gandhmow	3483	1908	54.78	1575	45.21
5	Shingimari	2943	1662	56.47	1281	43.52
6	Bansar	3251	1660	51.06	1591	48.93
7	Dadara	5476	2945	53.85	2531	46.21
8	Pacharia	4611	2466	53.48	2145	46.51

(Source of data: The 1997 Panchayat Election Voter List)

The Table-I indicates that all eight Gaon Panchayats under Sualkuchi Development Block, the male Gaon Sabha members are little larger than the women Gaon Sabha members. These Gaon Sabha members have a heterogeneous character. There are two religious classes of people within the area of Sualkuchi Development Block. The majority people belong to Hindu and the rest one is Muslim. Besides, there are about 16 percent SC and about 2 percent ST members of the Gaon Sabha under Sualkuchi Development Block. (Source of data: The Office of the Sualkuchi Development Block)

Thus, the constitutional mandate has been followed in Assam, Particularly in the Gaon Panchayats and the Gaon Sabhas under Sualkuchi Development Block although inadequate representations in some extent have been found regarding the SC and the ST community.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Status of Panchayati Raj in the State and Union Territories published for Institute of Social Sciences, Concept Publishing Company, 2000,P-8
2. The working of Panchayats in Assam with special reference to the role of Women Representatives(A Case Study of Nalbari District).Study sponsored by the Rastriya Gramin Vikash Nidhi, Guwahati and the Indian Institute of Social Science Social Science, New Delhi,P-7
3. Narang A.S.(2005):Indian Government and Politics, Gitanjali Publishing House, New Delhi, P-298
4. Sharma Dr.M.P. and Sadana Dr. B.L.(2002): Public Administration in Theory and Practice, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, Present Edition,P-760
5. Opcit, Status of Panchayati Raj in the State and Union Territories of India,2000,P-12
6. Talukdar Dr. A.C., an article on 73rd Amendment of the Constitution: Its spirit and its implications, P-5
7. The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994, Chapter III, Section 4 (II)
8. Ibid. Chapter IV,Section,9
9. Ibid. Chapter IV, Section 22
- 10.Ibid., Chapter V, Section 31
- 11.Ibid., Chapter VI, Section 64
- 12.Ibid., Chapter VI, Section 81
- 13.Sharma Bhupen(2006): Rejuvenating Panchayati Raj, Ideology and Indian State, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi 1st Publication, P-179
- 14.Consultation Paper on working of the Constitutional Provisions (Part IX) for Decentralization of Panchayats, Institute of Social Science,New Delhi,2001,P-26
- 15.Government of Assam Finance(Economic Affairs) Department Notification Orders by the Governor, No-FFA 182/2005/375, February 6, 2006, P-12
- 16.Opcit., Sharma Bhupen, P-172

CHAPTER –V

Functioning of Constitutional Gaon Panchayats:

Development is a process where requires democracy and decentralization is the first step towards fulfilling this process. The local governance is now strengthening its base in the country with people-centred approach. In fact, the issue of governance has assumed more important with the introduction of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment.¹ The Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) have been envisaged as institutions of self-government constituted under Article 243 B for the rural areas. As a result, they are to look after rural administration and rural management as well as to promote rural development and planning.²

The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution came into operation in 1993. Since then, most of the states have passed legislation to bring their PRIs in conformity with the new situation. So, Panchayats are functioning today in almost all the states though there is variation from state to state regarding their structure, devolution of authority, number of tiers, and length of tenure etc.³

The Eleventh Schedule provides for 29 subjects to be administered by the Panchayat are:

- Agriculture including agricultural extension
- Land improvement, implementation of land reforms, land consolidation and soil conservation
- Minor irrigation, water management and watershed development
- Animal husbandry, dairying and poultry
- Fisheries
- Social Forestry and Farm forestry
- Minor forest produce
- Small scale industries, including food processing industries
- Khadi, village and cottage industries
- Rural housing
- Drinking water
- Fuel and fodder
- Road, culverts, bridge, ferries, waterways and other means of communication
- Rural electrification, including distribution of electricity
- Non-conventional sources
- Poverty alleviation programmes
- Education, including primary and secondary schools

- Technical training and vocational education
- Adult and non-formal education
- Libraries
- Cultural activities
- Market and fairs
- Health and sanitation including hospital, primary health centres and dispensaries
- Family welfare
- Women and child development
- Social welfare, including welfare of the handicapped and mentally retarded
- Welfare of the weaker section and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes
- Public distribution system
- Maintenance of community assets.⁴

However, the Eleventh Schedule does not specify the 'functions', 'powers' and 'authority'. That task is left to the respective state legislatures. Most of the state legislatures have interpreted the provisions in a way that seem to be in contravention with the basic principles of democratic decentralization. How much autonomy Panchayat should enjoy, is a matter of judgement as well as policy.

The Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 re-introduced the three tier system of PRIs in Assam supposedly transferred altogether 29 subjects to the functional domain of the PRIs. The three tier Panchayat Bodies are responsible for the preparation of the Annual Plan for the development of the area that comes under their respective jurisdiction.

The BDO is the de facto and the de jure guardians for the Anchalik Panchayats (AP) and the Gaon Panchayats (GP). As per the direction of the Project Director, DRDA, the BDO informs the AP and the GPs under its jurisdiction about the probable budget allocation for the ensuing year usually by the end of February. Accordingly, the AP and the GPs prepare their budgets (the Action Plan) enlisting the schemes specifying the amount required for that.

In the process of preparation as well as implementation of the scheme, both the Anchalik Panchayats and the Gaon Panchayat under its jurisdiction have to depend heavily on the technical persons, normally the Junior Engineer (JE) of the Block Development Officer in the process of preparation as well as implementation of the schemes. The technical staffs of the BDO are not accountable to the Panchayati Raj Instruction. Of course, each JE has been assigned the responsibility of looking after four to five Gaon Panchayats on an

average. The JE has to assist the Gaon Panchayats in preparation of Action Plans and he has to verify the completed work and reports to the BDO. It has been observed that the president of the Gaon Panchayats has to constantly pursue the JE to do the verification required for making the payment for the completed work.⁵

The statutory provision of constituting different standing committees by the PRIs at three tier levels has been mechanically fulfilled. In some cases, the elected functionaries are not aware of the existence of such standing committees in their respective Panchayats. Lack of proper understanding on the part of many of the elected representative about the structure and functioning of the Panchayati Raj has been one of the major factors responsible for the ridiculous state of affairs. Yet no conscious attempt has been made so far by the state government to ensure functioning of the standing committees as an integral part of the process of democratic decentralization.⁶

The Gaon Panchayat in Assam is hardly guided by the elementary considerations of economic planning. These Gaon Panchayat are now busy primarily with enlisting the small schemes for the SGRY, MGNREGA, PMGSY, and their implementation. Besides these schemes, the Gaon Panchayat involvement is necessary for construction of houses for the rural poor under the Indira Awaas Yojana (IAY). But the mechanism, evolving in Assam provides a very little limited scope for the Gaon Panchayat is required to constitute a construction committee involving the beneficiaries identified by the Gaon Panchayat for the houses to be constructed under the IAY. The secretary of the Gaon Panchayat is also the secretary of such a construction committee. On the other hand, one of the beneficiaries is its chairman. But the amount required for construction of the houses is disbursed by the concerned BDO to the account jointly handled by the secretary and the president of the construction committee, indeed, the Gaon Panchayat has no role to play after constitution of the construction committee. Therefore, the role of the Gaon Panchayat regarding IAY is confined primarily to identification of the beneficiaries.

Functions undertaken by the eight GPs under Sualkuchi Development Block:

Annual Plan preparation is one of the important mandated functions of the Gaon Panchayat.⁷ "But the planning at the grassroots level is only national"⁸. The Gaon Panchayats prepare Action Plan for the funds available through various schemes. These schemes are forwarded to Anchalik Panchayat for approval. The authorities of the Anchalik Panchayat scrutinize the action plans and approve the same with or without asking for modification. Some

secretaries, president and members of the Gaon Panchayat under Sualkuchi Anchalik Panchayat say that they never get the resources according to their requirement. They say "We take up the works based on the availability of the funds, but no vice versa". As they mentioned, the main sources for implementation of various schemes are :(a) amount received as the award of the Eleventh /Twelfth Finance Commission, (b) amount transferred by DRDA for implementation of the SGRY schemes etc.

The Gaon Panchayats under Sualkushi Anchalik Panchayat are always at the receiving end and they cannot demand the resources according to their plan. In spite of this limitation, out of 8 Gaon Panchayats, 3 Gaon Panchayats have found healthy trend developing in the Panchayats as the elected representatives started discussing the financial requirement in the GP meetings. These three GPs have been meeting once within a week in the office of their GPs. However, other GPs have been meeting especially when schemes have to be prepared as well as when the fund will flow from SGRY or Eleventh/Twelfth Finance Commission.

Budget Estimation:

So far as budget estimation is concerned, it is passed by the GP and forwarded to the AP for approval. If the GP fails in estimating the budget, the secretary will have to prepare a budget and pass it through the Action Plan. However, the Action Plan does not reflect the Panchayat planning process in its true sense because such a plan is based on schemes sponsored by the state and central governments. The Panchayat has nothing to do with this function except undertaking the function of recommendation.⁹ In fact, the Action Plans were prepared more or less by the PRIs Department and all these GPs had to do only to implement the Action Plan as per the direction of the department.

Regarding budget estimation of the GPs, it was found that out of eight, six presidents and their secretaries stated that they had not undertaken the function of Annual budget estimation. Among eight presidents, two had pleaded ignorant about the concerned matter. However, the secretaries of the eight GPs had expressed the similar views that their GP had not undertaken the functions of budget estimation.

The contributing factors for the inability to undertake these functions were as follows:

- In a significant number of cases, the proceedings of the Gaon Sabha were confined to the selection of the beneficiaries for different schemes.

- The Gaon Sabha meetings were not held regularly either because of strained relationship between elected and non- elected officials or lack of interest in Gaon Sabha meetings, leaders and the public.

The main source of funds of the GPs were the allocation of the amount received from the DRDA Kamrup, under SGRY as well as the amount as award of the Eleventh / Twelfth Finance Commission. However, the state's shares were less than 20 percent under SGRY, even these were not disbursed to the GPs in due time. Besides, most of these amounts were deducted at the source for the payments of electricity charges for water supply, streetlights and office lighting. This implies that the proportion of united grants actually received from the total allocation was small in most of the GPs. This also suggests that the GPs did not have sufficient autonomy in respect of meeting the needs and preparing a plan based on needs.

As a result, the GPs under Sualkuchi Development Block had to mainly implement the schemes sponsored by the state and the central governments. However, these schemes allowed the least scope for planning because the schemes already specified the beneficiaries, the sector and the rules for spending the funds. Facing with this similar kind of situation, the eight GPs under study area did not have to do anything other than identifying the beneficiaries for the schemes.

Collection of Taxes:

The Assam Panchayats Act of 1994 provides to the GPs the power of collection of taxes from their different sources such as tax on houses, shops license for starting tea stall, hotel carts, carriages, bi-cycles, rickshaw etc.

Now ,it has been focussed on the collection of taxes of the eight GPs under Sualkuchi Development Block:

As per 1991 census, the area of Madhya Sualkuchi GP is 7 square Kilometres. It has not estimated the sources of revenue collection. However, as informed by the president and the secretary of the GP, the main sources for the collection of the GP are- one private Hat from which Rs.7000/- is collected annually. Moreover, the GP has spent this amount honorarium to the elected representatives and maintaining the GP office by paying newspaper bills, electricity bills as well as meeting other expendirures. But, no development initiatives has been taken by the GP spending the income from its own resources. Actually, there was no permanent tax collector for the GP. So far as other seven GP is concerned, they are not in a position to pay due honorarium to their members as these GPs had not received any fund from the collection of

taxes except a petty amount which was not sufficient even to meet the refreshment expenses. The major problem is that these GP do not have tax collectors to collect taxes.

Process of implementing schemes in the eight Gaon Panchayats under Sualkuchi Development Block:

The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 provides that beneficiary selection and schemes selection must be done through the recommendation of the Gaon Sabha meeting. Out of the eight GPs, three GPs had met at least once a week. Other five GPs had met when schemes would be adopted or money would come from SGRY, 11th / 12th Commission for implementing of any schemes.

Implementation of IAY programme:

The objective of the IAY is primarily to help the construction of dwelling units and up gradation of existing unserviceable kutcha houses of members of the SCs and the STs., to free bonded labourers. The SC/ST rural poor below the poverty line were provided with grant-in-aid. In fact, the target group for houses under IAY includes people below poverty lines. One of the main features of the IAY programme is that for SC/ST people, a minimum of 60 percent of funds are to be utilized for construction of houses. IAY is a centrally sponsored scheme found on cost sharing basis between the government of India and the states in the ratio of 75:25. There are two components of IAY programme—IAY New Construction and IAY Up-gradation where 80 percent of the total allocation is utilized for IAY New Construction and 20 percent is used for IAY Up-gradation.¹⁰

The Sualkuchi Anchalik Panchayat (AP) within the entire area of the Sualkuchi Development Block has implemented the IAY scheme. The Table-1 indicates the year wise implementation of the number of schemes under IAY within the area of the Block.

Table-I

Year for implementation on the scheme	No. Of IAY (New) Implemented scheme	No. of IAY(Up-gradation) Implemented scheme
	59	30
2002-2003	125	63
2003-2004	202	101
2004-2005	164	34
2005-2006	266	Nil
2006-2007	816	228
Total		

(Source or data: The Sualkuchi Development Block Office)

The Table-1 indicates that from 2002-03 to 2006-07, the Sualkuchi AP had implemented altogether 816 schemes under IAY (New) and 228 schemes under IAY (Up -gradation). But some members of the Sualkuchi AP reported that most of the schemes had been implemented under the direct supervision of the Block. Besides, they felt that although the BDO is an ex-officio secretary of the AP, in most cases, he likes to play the role as a BDO regarding the implementation of a scheme of the AP rather than as the secretary. Besides, the schemes like Vidhya (old person) Pension have also been supervised by the BDO. The GPs have nothing to do with these schemes.

Although the Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 provides 29 subjects to the Panchayat Bodies of Assam, but the state government has not transferred all the subjects accordingly. Besides, unlike the state like Karnataka, the PRIs of Assam have failed to generate income from their own sources. The Assam State Finance Commission recommended merely only 2 percent of the state's taxes and ten percent of motor vehicle taxes.¹¹

Although, the constitution has sanctioned a fresh role to the Panchayat in the process of the re-institutionalization, the PRIs in Assam can be characterized as the mere addition of the DRDA. The Panchayats have been largely depending on the DRDA and the Block Development Offices. In fact, the set patterns of the functioning of the PRIs in Assam has made a mockery of all notions such as democracy at the grassroots, transparency, accountability etc.¹² Realizing the importance of the fact as well as the 'Order' passed by the Guwahati High Court, the state government of Assam had transferred 23 subjects under 17 departments to the Panchayat Bodies.¹³

From the above analysis, it has been observed that the PRIs of Assam in general and particular in the study area has not been functioning as self-governing unit. In this regard, lack of political will, bureaucratic dominance, ignorance and indifferent attitude of the elected representatives as well as the members of the Gaon Sabhas including SC/ST people are evident. So, 'will' of the state ruling party, co-operative attitude of the opposition parties and active participation of mass people irrespective of cast, creed and religion as well as control over bureaucracy are inevitable.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Joseph T.M.(Ed.),(2007): Local Governance in India, Ideas, Challenges, and Strategies, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi,P-365
2. Bhattacharya Moitree(2002):Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, Democratic Decentralisation or Democratic Centralism,Manak Publications Pvt.Ltd, New Delhi, P-76)
3. Sharma Dr. M.P. and Sadana Dr.B.L.(2002): Public Administration in theory and Practise, Kitab,Mahal, Allahbad, P-764
4. The Constitution (Seventy-Third Amendment) Act, 1992(20th April,1993,Part IX, section 4)
5. Consultation Paper on the Working of the Constitutional Provisions (Part-IX) for Decentralization of Panchayats(2001), New Delhi,P-192,P-193
- 6.Ibid,P-193
7. Opcit.Joseph T.M.(Ed.,P-370,P-415
- 8.Sharma Bhupen (2006):Rejuvenating Panchayati Raj, Ideology and Indian State,Akansha Publishing House,New Delhi,P-202
- 9.Ibid,P-219
- 10.Deka Jogesh(2004):Panchayat and Rural Development Department in Assam: A structural and Functional Analysis(An unpublished thesis)P-209,P-210
- 11.Opcit, Sharma Bhupen, P-185
- 12.Ibid, P-202
- 13.The Dainik Agradoot, an Assamese daily newspaper, Guwahati (Assam), 23-06- 2007

CHAPTER – VI

The Role of Gaon Sabha:

The Gaon Sabha is a forum for registering 'voice' of individual citizens in the process of decision making on matters that relate to their lives. It is the only forum where people can take part in "direct democracy". The Gaon Sabha can be used by the people for collective thinking and participating in the activities of Gaon Panchayat, take collective decision on village level plan and collaborate with Gaon Panchayat in implementing its programmes. A vibrant Gaon Sabha has the potentiality of realizing the vision of participatory governance at least at the village level.¹The Gaon Sabha literally means village meeting. It is a meeting of the villagers to discuss common problems they face in their village. In many ways, it is comparable to the citizen forum.

The 73rd Amendment of the constitution has thrown up many new challenges to the rural local self-government. Among these challenges, one is grassroots participation. This amendment has attempted to institutionalize people's participation through a body called Gram Sabha². Article 243 A of the constitution states that "A Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and performs such functions at the village level as the legislature of a state may, by law provide". The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution recognizes Gaon Sabha as a statutory unit. It is defined as "a body consisting people's area of Panchayat at the village level". The Gaon Sabha is the reservoir of people's power. It is the embodiment of Gram Swaraj which means rule of a person over self. It is the place where the Panchayats and people have to stand in face to face position. The Gaon Sabha brings the village community under one roof collectively debate the issues of the concerning Gaon (village).

In most states, the functional domain of the Gaon Sabha is limited to discussions of annual administration reports, annual statement of accounts, and the budget, identification of beneficiaries, promoting unity and harmony in the village, adult education and so on.

The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 provides that the Gaon Sabha shall meet from time to time but a period of three months shall not intervene between any two meetings. It may make recommendations and suggestions to the Gaon Panchayats:-

- The Report in respect of Development Programme of the Gaon Panchayat relating to the preceding year and Development Programme proposed to be undertaken during the current year.
- The promotion of unity and harmony among all sections of society in the village etc.
- The Gaon Panchayat shall give due consideration to the recommendation and suggestion of the Gaon Sabha.

Every meeting of the Gaon Sabha may be prescribed over by the president of the concerned Gaon Panchayat and in his absence by the vice-president or any of people to be selected by the majority of the Gaon Sabha members for the meeting. The secretary of the Gaon Panchayat shall convene the meeting of the Gaon Sabha with due approval of the president of the Gaon Panchayat and in consultation with the Block Development Officer (BDO) concerned provided wide publicity is given fifteen days ahead of the date for holding the Gaon Sabha meeting. If the president fails to approve the convening of the Gaon Sabha, the secretary of the Gaon Panchayat shall convene the Gaon Sabha in time in consultation with the BDO. Besides, whenever, the Anchalik Panchayat directs for holding such Gaon Sabha meeting for the purpose of selection of beneficiaries, the secretary of the Gaon Panchayat shall convene the meeting within twenty days.

The quorum for a meeting of the Gaon Sabha shall be one-tenth of the total members or one hundred numbers of voters of the villages whichever less is. If a quorum is not formed, the presiding authority shall wait for thirty minutes. If within such period, there is no quorum, the presiding authority shall adjourn the meeting till the same day of the following week or any other date or time which shall not be less than twenty-four hours and more than seven days. The adjourned meeting shall not require quorum for taking up the business. Any resolution to the matter entrusted to the Gaon Sabha shall have to pass by a majority of votes of the members present. Moreover, if Gaon Sabha fails to identify the beneficiaries within a reasonable time, the secretary of the Gaon Panchayat will identify the beneficiaries in consultation with the president of the Gaon Panchayat and the BDO concerned. Even, if the secretary fails to convene the Gaon Sabha in time for selection of beneficiaries, the BDO shall convene the Gaon Sabha.³

The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 has assigned the Gaon Sabha such functioning as mobilization of voluntary labour, contribution in cash and kinds for Community Welfare Programmes, identification of beneficiaries for implementation of Development Schemes pertaining to villages and so on. The

Act has not empowered the Gaon Sabha to have control over Gaon Panchayat and to take a final decision in matters of village development. Its role is only advisory.

In Assam, the ruling Congress I government had made efforts to re-institutionalize Gaon Sabha through "Raijor Padulit Raijor Sarkar" (RPRS). This means Redressal of Public grievances at people's door. It allows the bureaucracy to work on behalf of the elected representatives of the Panchayats because of newly elected first time Constitutional Panchayat Bodies had not given authority to function till May, 2002. Even after the formation of Panchayat Bodies, the state government decided to continue the RPRS programme for a few years although it stops now. Actually, it was a well-designed political strategy of bureaucratic domination.

Participation at the Gaon Sabha meeting by the Gaon Sabha members:

The Gaon Sabha is designed to be convened quarterly i.e. in October, January, April and July. It is the basic unit for participation of the rural masses along with the poorer section especially belong to the SCs and STs.

manner, but the other meetings were much unorganized in nature. About 80 percent of the respondents were hardly convinced about the need for such meetings and the purpose it might serve in ensuring people's participation. About 92 percent of the respondents confessed that although meetings were called since 2001, but the people's participation was not encouraging. The trend of participation belonging to SC and ST communities in the Gaon Sabha meeting is no exception of it. About 96 percent of the respondents informed that their concerned GPs generally failed to cross even 100 people's attendance in the Gaon Sabha meetings which number is regarded as the minimum requirement to hold a Gaon Sabha meeting.

About 95 percent of the elected functionaries including SC/ST in general remarked that in spite of all efforts, they could not mobilize more people to attend these meetings. They informed that it was not possible together more than 60-70 persons in Gaon Sabhas where only 8-10 persons attended from SC/ST community. They cited the following reasons for people's lack of interest:

- People do not have time, as they are busy in bread-earning activities.
- Lack of faith in the utility of such meetings.
- Long distance they have to travel.

As a result, altogether about 64 percent of the elected functionaries (where 34 percent belongs to SC/ST community) confessed that they showed in the writing was not what happened in reality. In reality, about 60-70 persons attended, but what the elected functionaries did, was that they called some of their constituency people and requested them to sign in the attendance register whenever they met them. This signature collection went on till the quorum was achieved. They did this because they wanted to show at least in writing that quorum was achieved, at least it was learnt.

During the field observation, it was noticed that there were tendencies like blowing up the number of attendance, postponing meetings on account of poor attendance, turning the Gaon Sabha into forum for tabling demands of the people instead of making it the forum for decision making by the people. It was also observed that about 84 percent people belonging from both General as well as SC/ST category failed to understand the purpose of such meeting. They thought that such meetings were useless and should not be held. When asked about the issues that they discussed in the Gaon Sabha meetings, the common answer that the respondents had given that there was nothing except producing the statement of income and expenses of the Gaon Panchayats. In the study area, altogether about 22 percent (including 9 percent from SC/ST people) respondents stayed in the dark about the Gaon Sabha meetings.

It has been observed that there is no clear idea among the Gaon Sabha members about the purposes of these meetings and the influence they can exert in the process of decision-making by participating in these meetings. It was learnt that even those who attended, could not give any positive suggestions. They were mere spectators at the meetings where the presidents, officials or the members of Gaon Panchayats used to address them. About 64 percent General and about 79 percent SCs/STs remarked that there was no use of attending such meetings, as the Panchayat leadership always remained indifferent to their grievances. Further they felt that by attending meetings, they could help neither themselves nor the villagers. The direct observation of the proceedings of a Gaon Sabha meeting brought to light the conduct and attitude of some attending members. Anger was uttered for not initiating promised works or leaving certain works incomplete. Even some members clashed with one another. Such Gaon Sabha meeting could be hardly useful and helpful to the village people. It exposed the lack of leadership to guide members to debate and discusses issues in a positive constructive ways. The idea which still exists among people is that Panchayats are the agents of union as well as state governments to implement developmental schemes in villages. So, people always expect benefit out of them. They are not aware that Panchayats are decentralized units to ensure self-governance. So, there is a need to bring attitudinal change among all categories of people including SCs and STs. People must understand the desperate need to ensure self-governance. They must come forward in order to make some constructive contribution to the activities of the Panchayats. They must contribute to formulate broad policies and to take decisions regarding administration and development of villages. Many a time it was heard that elected functionaries has been playing the role of 'giver' where people play the role of 'receiver'.

It has been observed that Gaon Sabhas could hardly live up to expectations. One reason may be people's lethargy. The other is the lack of proper understanding among the people about the purpose of these fora. In this regards, the political parties civil society members must take sufficient steps to develop a proper understanding among the common people.

The Gaon Sabha has been entrusted with the function of selecting functionaries under various poverty alleviation programmes. However, there is an ambiguity. If it fails to identify, the beneficiaries within a 'reasonable time', the secretary of the GP is empowered to finalise the list in consultation with the president of the GP and the BDO. However, the Gaon Sabha must have been given the final say in the matter for reasons of transparency and fairness.

In fact, there is a need of "political will" and honesty which will act as an impulsion for successful and enthusiastic functioning of the PRIs. The elected functionaries including the SC and ST elected functionaries of the GPs i.e. president, and the members need intensive training to be well aware of their responsibility, power and goal of the Constitutional PRIs. They must develop leadership qualities to enlighten and guide the Gaon Sabha members. It is true that an ideal Gaon Sabha has the potentiality for realizing the vision of participatory governance at the village. Again, people's participation is the core of decentralized planning. Gaon Sabha on the other hand, is inevitable in the popular planning system. However, the study focussed that the concept of Gaon Sabhas has not been taken seriously by the state government as well as by a large number of rural folks. To make Gaon Sabha a real legislature of the rural villagers, the state government must provide controlling, decision-making and monitoring powers to it including the Social Audit System to enable it to play a supervisory role over the developmental activities of the GP. The power to remove the president or the vice president or any other elected functionaries of the GP for misleads and corrupt practices would make the Gaon Sabhas in true sense, a democratic controlling body. It is the only powerful and direct democratic device in controlling and making the Gaon Panchayat authorities accountable, responsible and responsive to the Gaon Sabha and the people. Under the present circumstances, people have nothing to do after electing representatives for five years. The elected functionaries feel safe once elected because people cannot remove them. They can be removed only by executive action. Hence, they feel it necessary to please the bureaucracy and party higher ups even people's interest is at risk.

There is a greater urgency to amend the Panchayat Act for giving the Gaon Sabha the power of controlling and monitoring apart from the power to discuss debate and decide issues which are very important to their locality and themselves.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Consultation Paper on the working of the Constitutional Provisions (Part IX) for Decentralization of Panchayats, Institute of Social Science, New Delhi,2001,39
2. Verma S.P.(Ed.): The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol.- XL VI, January-March ,2000, No.1,P-38, P-39
3. The Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 Chapter III, Section 4

CHAPTER- VII

The Participatory Role of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe people at Constitutional GPs:

The constitution of India empowers the government to provide special benefits and preference to previously disadvantaged sections of the people. Article 15 (4) provides that the state may make any special provision for the advancement of any socially, and educationally backward classes of citizens or to the SC/ST qualify this Article.¹

Article 243-D of the constitution provides for reservation of seats in Panchayats at all levels i.e village, intermediate and district for the SC, the ST and the women. Particularly, the seats to be reserved for the SC and the ST in each tier of Panchayat shall be in proportion to their respective population in the area of that Panchayat. One-third of such reserved seats shall be assigned for the women of the SC and the ST. Moreover, offices of the Chairpersons of the Panchayats at different levels shall be reserved for the SC and the ST. However, number of such reserved offices shall be in proportion to their respective populations.²

One of the important features of the 73rd Constitution Amendment is the reservation of seats for members of the SC/ST in the Panchayat Bodies. This provision has got a constitutional guarantee by this amendment. The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 also provides provisions for the SC/ST people in the Panchayat Bodies. The Act provides that in every GP, the seat shall be reserved for the SCs and the STs. The Act provides that the number of seat so reserved shall bear, as nearly as may be, the same proportion, the total number of seats to be filled up by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the SCs in that GP area or the STs in that area bears to the total population of that area and such seats shall be allotted by the rotation to different constituencies in a GP in such manner as may be prescribed.

In Assam, Provisions for reservation of seats in Panchayats for the SC/ST people were made prior to the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. The glaring example in this regard is the Assam Panchayat Act of 1973. This Act came into force in April, 1974 and it made provisions for reservation of seats in Panchayat for the SC/ST³.

The offices of the Chairpersons in the GPs shall be reserved for the SCs, STs and Women in such manner as may be prescribed:

Provided that the number of offices of Chairpersons reserved for the SCs or STs in the GPs shall bear as nearly as may be, the same proportion to the total number of such offices in the GPs as the population of the SCs in the ['District'] bears to the total population of the 'District'⁴

It has been observed that since 2001, the Constitutional Panchayat Bodies has been functioning in Assam. Along with general category, people belonging to SCs and STs had offered chance to participate in the Panchayat Bodies as elected functionaries as well as the members of the Gaon Sabha.

The 2001 census of Kamrup District records 12, 78,999 as General Category of population where SC/ST population numbers 33, 5108. The SC/ST women population is 1,64,525 which is almost half of the total SC/ST population(49.9 percent). The SC/ST women must have been proportionately assigned 3 seats instead of 2 seats out of the total 6 seats. The SC/ST women have got only about 34 percent seats whereas the SC/ST male people have about 67 percent seats. Thus, the division of seats has been quite disproportionate. It is a kind of gender discrimination within the SC/ST people themselves.

Regarding Kamrup District, the SC/ST representation to the APs is about 18 percent. As in the case of kamrup ZP, a marked discrimination in the representations of the SC/ST women in the APs has become known from the data. Compared to the SC/ST male i.e about 13 percent, female representation in the APs is only about 5 percent.

(Source of data: The Assam State Election Commission)

In Sualkuchi AP, out of eight elected functionaries to the AP only, one male belongs to the SC population which comprises 25 percent. The total SC/ST population of the AP is only 9541. When proportionately distributed, 25 percent SC/ST population should get two representatives instead of one. Eventually, one SC/ST woman representative could have been accommodated along with the lonely male member.

(Source of data: The Assam Panchayat Election, 2001)

In Kamrup District, the overall representation in the GP level from the SC/ST along with women comprises about 14 percent where male SC/ST and female SC/ST comprise about 9 percent and about 5 percent respectively.

(Source of data: The Assam State Election Commission)

The Table-I one indicates the GP wise representation of the SC/ST in the eight GPs under Sualkuchi AP (Since 2001 to 2006)

Table-I

Name of GP	GP wise population	GP wise SC/ST population	GP wise % of SC/ST population	Elected GP members along with president	Elected from reserved seat (SC/ST)	% of reserved members (SC/ST)
Pachim Sualkuchi	6501	374	5.75%	11	5	45.45%
Pub Sualkuchi	21295	5833	7.39%	11	5	45.45%
Madhya Sualkuchi	7821	315	4.02%	11	-	0
Bansar	6796	370	5.44%	11	-	0
Gandhmow	5065	1295	25.56%	11	1	9.09
Shingimari	5224	25	0.47%	11	-	0
Dadara	6582	1215	18.45%	11	2	18.18
Pacharia	7929	114	1.43%	11	-	0
Total	64431	9541	14.8%	88	13	14.77

(Source of data: The office of the kamrup Zilla Parishad)

It is evident from the figures shown in the Table-I that the total SC/ST population altogether in eight GPs under Sualkuchi AP comprises 14.8 percent and the representation belonging to these categories in the GP level comprises 14.77 percent. From this fact, it seems to be adequate representation in the GP level from the SC/ST population altogether. However, it has also been observed that out of eight GPs, four GPs have the SC/ST representation in the GP level whereas other four GPs have no representatives from the SC/ST altogether. It is also pertinent to be noted that out of thirteen SC/ST elected representatives in the GP level, two are presidents where one is woman. So, it has been observed that the GPs under the study area have fulfilled the constitutional mandate by providing representation for the SC/ST population in the GP level.

Participatory role of SC/ST elected Functionaries at GP level in the decision making process:

It is important to be noted here that altogether 30 GP elected representatives belonging to SC/ST categories (who have been elected by the Assam Panchayat Election of 2001 or 2007 /2008 or 2013). Among 30 SC/ST elected functionaries, 6 percent expressed that they found interference from upper caste representatives. For instance, the then GP president of the Pub Sualkuchi GP belonging to SC community (period 2001 to 2006) allegation against the upper caste representatives at the time of interview was that they did not want a president for their GP who belonged to the SC community. As a result, his powers were illegally curtailed by a vote of no confidence which was also not approved following the proper procedures as prescribed by the relevant provisions of the Assam Panchayat Act of 1994. The said GP president was made a rubber stamp president who was not allowed to exercise any financial power. He could only put his signature in the cheques, but all activities whether it may be financial or developmental were supervised by the vice president and six other members. The president also condemned the role of the BDO as well as the GP secretary. In this regard. Such manipulation politics as the GP level does not signify well. He informed that he was the representative from the eight GP s who attended in the Panchayat training programmes held in Delhi.

The study emphasizes to enquire the leadership quality of the SC/ST elected functionaries in the GPs under sample area. It is right that caste plays an important role in determining leadership. Traditionally men from high caste used to head the villages. The study conducted by M.N. Srinivas, Bal Narain and others located that in villages, the socially influential actors often trunk from higher castes who are virtually superior, economically, educationally and culturally empowered to lower castes.⁵

It has been mentioned here that thirty elected functionaries belonging to SC/ST community had been interviewed with a view to know their leadership quality as well as the participatory role played by them in their respective Panchayats particularly regarding the functional aspects. It is also essential to be mentioned here that occupation, education, participation in social organisations, political affiliation, etc. are possibly some prominent determinants that can help to know the leadership quality of the SC/ST elected functionaries in the grass-root level.

Table -II indicates the occupational status of the GP SC/ST elected representatives:

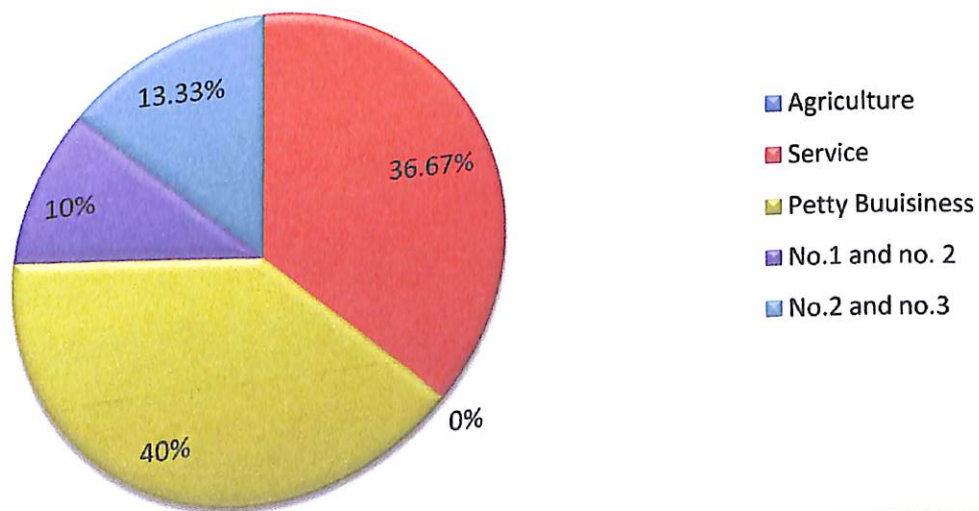
Table-II

Sl.No.	Occupation	Male representative	Female representatives	Total representatives	Percentage
1.	Agriculture	8	3	11	36.67
2.	Service	-	-	-	0
3.	Petty business	10	2	12	40
4.	No.1andNo.2.	2	1	3	10
5.	No.2 and No.3	2	2	4	13.33
6.	Total	22	8	30	100

(Source of data: Field Survey)

Pie Chart

The views of occupational status of the GP SC /ST elected representatives



It has been observed from the Table-II along with Pie Chart that the SC/ST GP representatives from petty business, agriculture, both agriculture and petty business as well as both service and petty business sectors comprised

40%, 36.67%, 13.33%, 10%, 0% respectively. The chart indicates that the largest occupational groups of the SC/ST representatives belong to petty business sectors and none were the representatives belong to both service and petty business sectors.

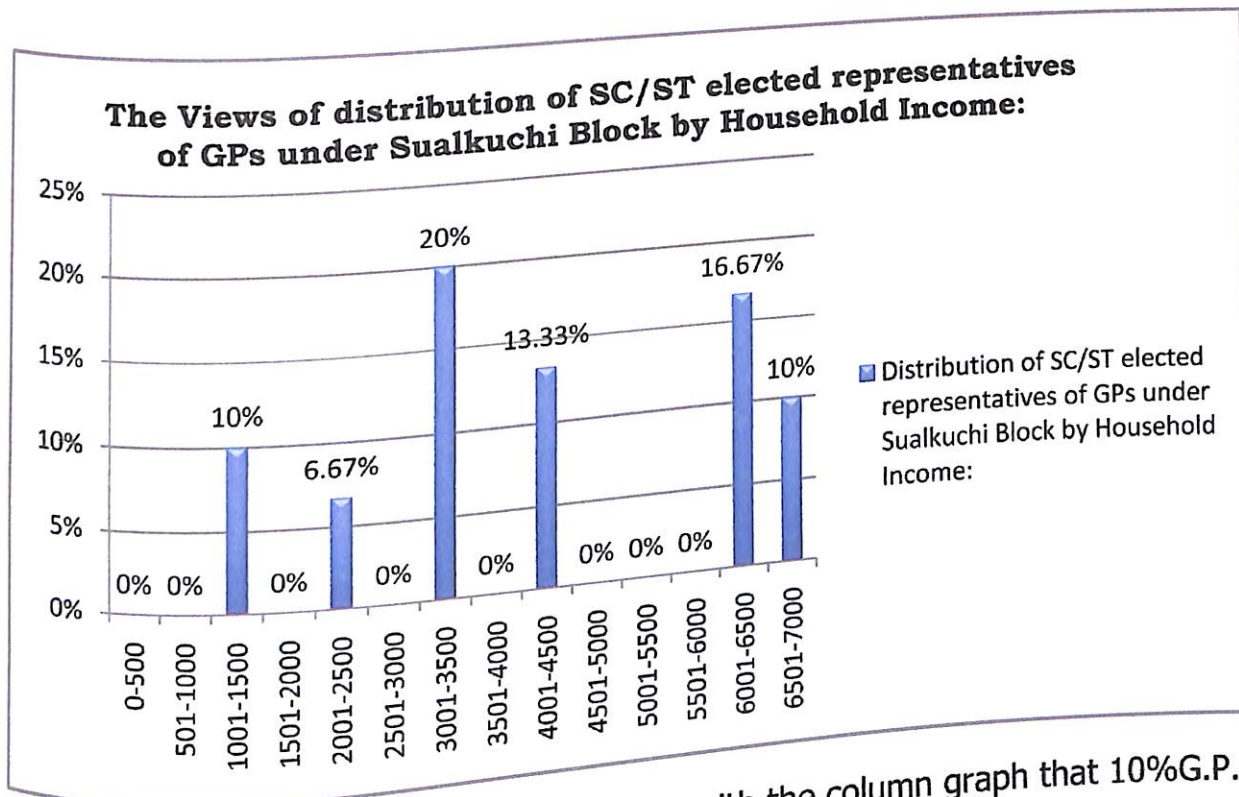
Table -III indicates the distribution of SC/ST elected representatives of GPs under Sualkuchi Block by Household Income:

Table-III

Sl.No.	Household Income (Per month) in Rs.	Number of household	Percentage
		-	0
1.	0—500	-	0
2.	501—1000	3	10
3.	1001—1500	-	0
4.	1501—2000	2	6.67
5.	2001—2500	-	0
6.	2501—3000	6	20
7.	3001—3500	-	0
8.	3501—4000	4	13.33
9.	4001—4500	-	0
10.	4501—5000	-	0
11.	5001—5500	-	0
12.	5551—6000	5	16.67
13.	6001—6500	3	10
14.	6501—7000	7	23.33
15.	7501 and above	30	100
	Total		

(Source of data: Field Survey)

Column Graph



It is evident from the Table III along with the column graph that 10% G.P. SC/ST representatives belonged to below poverty line category (The poverty line indicates household income up to Rs.18,000 annually or Rs. 1,500 per month (Source of data : The Sualkuchi Block Development Office). On the other hand, 66.67% G.P. SC/ST representatives belonged to middle category having income per month ranging from Rs.2001 to Rs.7000. The graph further indicates that 23.33% G.P. SC/ST representatives belonged to the rich category with monthly income from Rs.7000 and above.

The Table- IV indicates educational status of the SC/ST representatives in the GPs under Sualkuchi Development Block:

Table-IV

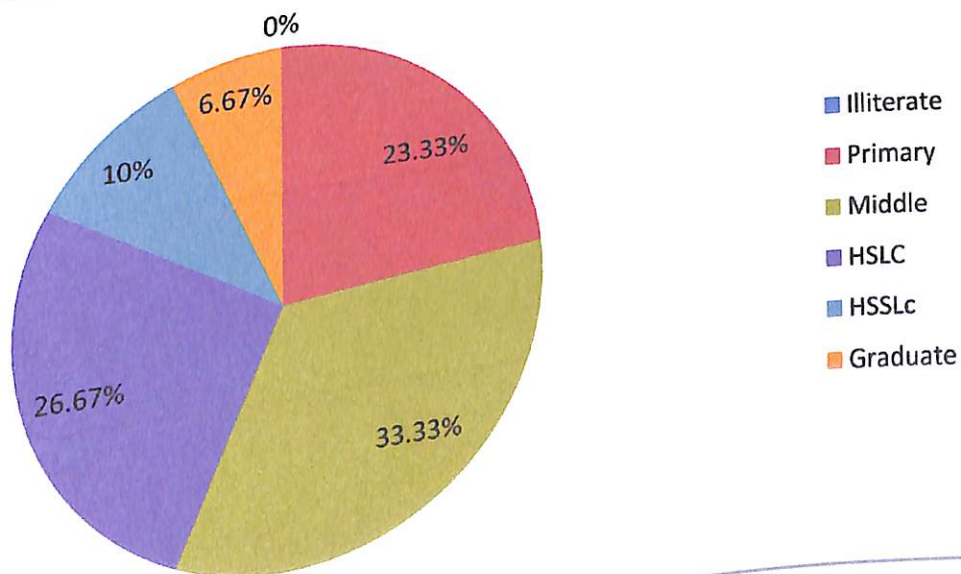
Sl.No.	Educational Status	No. SC/ST representatives	Percentage
1.	Illiterate	-	23.33
2.	Primary	7	33.33
3.	Middle	10	26.67
4.	HSLC	8	10
5.	HSSLC	3	6.67
6.	Graduate	2	100
	Total	30	

(Source of data: Field Survey)



Pie Chart

Educational Status of the SC/ST representative in the GPs



The Table-IV along with Pie Chart shows that every GP representative belonging to SC/ST is literate. Of course, the respondents belonging to middle section are the largest group .comprising 33.33 percent. On the other hand, the respondents belonging to the graduate comprised 6.67 percent only. Moreover, the respondents belonging to the Primary, HSLC, HSSLC comprise 23.33 percent, 26.67 percent and 10 percent respectively.

Table -V indicates the participation of the SC/ST representatives in social organisation :

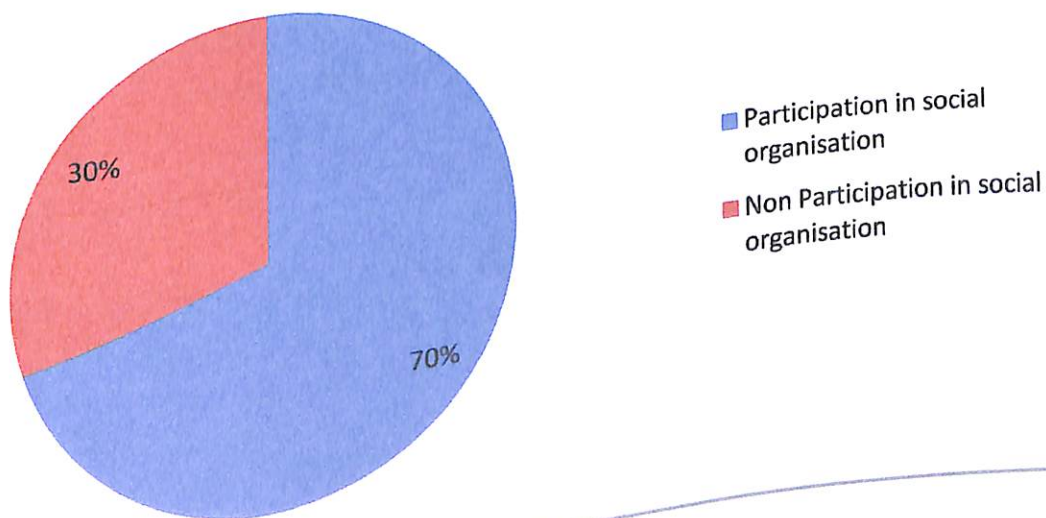
Table-V

Participation in Social Organisation	No. of SC/ST representatives	Percentage
No. of representatives participated in social organisation	21	70
No. of representative which have no participation in social organisation	9	30
Total	30	100

(Source of data: Field Survey)

Pie Chart

Participation of SC/ST representatives in social organisation



The Table V along with pie chart indicates that 70 percent SC/ST elected representatives in the GP level had social involvement in such organisations as student union, Samabai Samittee, Self-Help-Group and so on. During the time of field survey, the president of the Pub Sualkushi GP (For the period of 2001 to 2007) informed that he actively involved in some social organisations such as student movement, active member of local Khel (a division of people according to caste or profession) etc. even before getting elected president against reserved seat in favour of SC community. After becoming the president of the GP, he served as member of different school committees. He was also an active member of a political party. As he mentioned, he participated in a workshop programme held in Delhi, as a Panchayat representative from Assam.

Moreover, the president of the Paschim Sualkuchi GP (For the period of 2001 to 2007) who was a SC woman informed that since her student life, she got involved in different social organisations such as Student Union, Mahila Samittee, Shelf-Help-Group and so on. Besides, a SC GP member whose name was Rameswar Medhi (During the period of 2001 to 2007) stated that he was elected to Paschim Sualkuchi GP for third time. Moreover, he actively involved in different social organisations such as Samabai Samittee, School, organisation for development of the SC community etc. Thus, it has been found that 70 percent SC/ST representatives in the GP level in the study area had actively involved in social organisations. On the other hand, 30 percent had no social involvement before getting elected GP representatives. Of course, some of them had involved as president or member of the committee for the management of Anganbadi centre after being elected GP members. However, it has been observed that social involvement of the SC/ST representatives in the GP level of the study area was not discouraging.

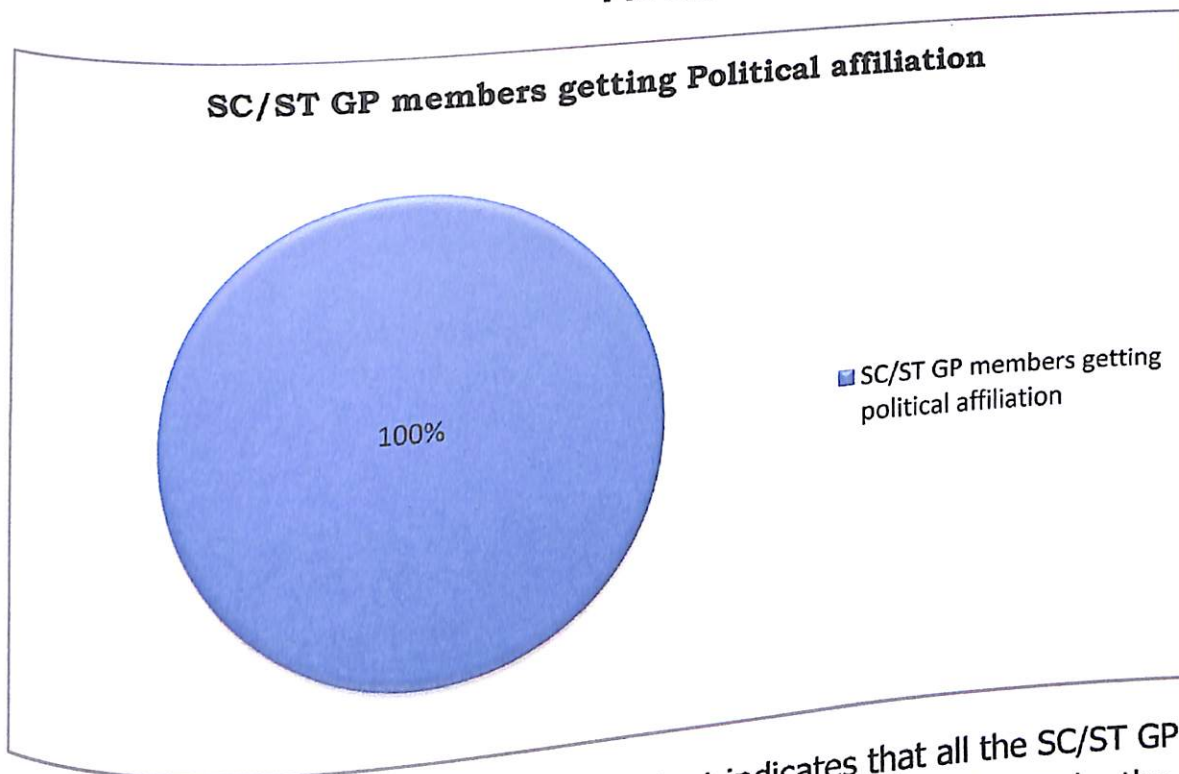
The Table –VI indicates the Political affiliation of the SC/ST representatives in the GP:

Table-VI

Political affiliation	Total	Overall percentage
No. of the SC/ST representatives who had political affiliation	30	100
Total	30	100

(Source of data: Field Survey)

Pie Chart



The Table- VI along with the Pie Chart indicates that all the SC/ST GP representatives had political affiliation and they contested election under the banner of some political parties. It comprises 100 percent.

From the field experience, it has been observed that the Caste Hindus lost their ascendancy gradually. Although there was a great degree of fury and unhappiness among the Caste Hindus over the matter at the beginning, they had no other way but to accept the change. They felt that Panchayats would become meaningless if such change in their composition is carried forward. They felt that these new men and women who are occupying the seats of powers are hardly educated and conscious enough to provide leadership to the people. On the country, it is easy for the actual wielders of power (the party leadership to guide the Panchayat members in whatever way they think better). However, this sort of analysis is not totally acceptable. In fact, there is a need to bring people who are conscious and aware, to the seats of power even if they belong to the SC/ST sections of society. The fact is that, there is a need to bring about a considerable breakthrough in the supremacy of Caste Hindus and the truth is that the situation of the grassroots level leadership remains far from satisfaction. The SC/ST leadership as in any other strata should evolve from below. The leader must materialize from among its own population rather than being imposed from above by a superior authority. For in the latter case, the leadership tends to depend upon the superior authority which places it in the leadership strata.

During the field study, it has been observed that whether General Caste or SC/ST members faced impediments while implementing schemes under the PRIs. Interference of local politicians and dominant caste groups, lack of people's participation, non-co-operation of government officials and delay in release of funds are the major hindrances faced by them.

In the time of interview, some GP presidents and GP members as well as Gaon Sabha members belonging to the SC/ST communities of the study area stated that the Panchayat schemes such as IAY, *Vidhya* Pension etc. must have been handed over to the Panchayat. But the interference in these matters by the bureaucrats has weakened the PRIs. The respondents also highlighted that no special schemes were implemented for the development of the SC/ST population. In most cases, although the Gaon Sabha meetings selected beneficiaries, later different fake list of the beneficiaries were prepared under the pressure of the ruling party workers.

The president of the Pub Sualkuchi GP (Period: 2001 to 2007) who belonged to the SC community remarked that he participated in a Panchayat Conference held in Delhi, 2002. They were trained in the in the Conference about 'funds' 'functions' and 'functionaries'. After joining that Conference, the respondent deeply felt that the people of states like Punjab, Karnataka and Kerala were well aware of the PRIs. In Assam it is still an experimental phase. He observed that State like Punjab, income source of the PRIs is high. On the contrary in Assam, lack of income generating source is a major problem.

It is important to be noted that the PRIs under the Sualkuchi Development Block were not able to generate income suitably from their own sources. As for instance, the Annual Budget of the Sualkuchi AP for the year 2003-04 indicated that the AP's total actual income was only the amount of Rs.37, 926 /- which was too less to take any developmental initiatives. The total real expenditure of the AP was the amount of Rs. 37,926/- for the year 2003-04 which was actual to the actual income. It is pertinent to be noted that the AP badly failed to generate income from its own sources such as hat/market, fisheries and so on. For instance, income estimates for the financial year 2003-04 from the hat/market and fisheries were the amount of Rs.43,000/- and Rs.18,100/- respectively. However, the AP could collect revenues from the hats/markets and fisheries amounting to only Rs. 18,600/- and Rs.8,600/- respectively. These constituted only 43.25 percent and 47.51 percent of the estimated amount.

(Compiled the data collected from the Office of the Kamrup Zilla Parishad)

So far as eight GPs under Sualkuchi Development Block are concerned, no GPs have assessed the source of tax or revenue collection. Besides, the GPs have failed to generate fund from their own resources. By contrast with that of the state like Karnataka, "with a new power in hand, Panchayats have posted a record of tax collection of the amount of Rs. 115 crore"⁶.

The president of the Pub Sualkuchi GP (period: 2001 -2007) had highlighted problem in this way that he was impeached by the body. Regarding his impeachment he observed that the members from the General Caste were more active in order to impeach him because he belonged to the SC Kaibarta. Moreover, he remarked that the secretary of the GP was non-co-operative and he attended irregularly at the GP Office. The president also noticed that no special schemes were implemented for the development of the SC community. Further, the respondent informed that the SC population within the area of Sualkuchi Silk City had left their traditional earning source. Today, almost cent percent people from SC/ST section earned their livelihood engaging themselves in Silk Cottage Industry. Their economic condition is better than the SC/ST of the other parts of the study area. So far as the participatory role regarding the decision making process of the GP is concerned, the SC/ST people were generally not played so active part.

The president of the Paschim Sualkuchi GP (Period: 2001-2007) who belonged to a SC Community viewed that her family background inspired to involve herself in the PRI as woman GP president. She had a sound economic background. Her husband who was a government employee persuaded her to join in the PRI. She informed that her GP members were co-operative and the decision was taken unanimously. But, no special schemes were taken for the improvement of the SC/ST community. She articulated her opinion that no higher caste ascendancy was found in her GP as the area was economically developed. About 90 percent household earned their livelihood through the Silk Cottage industry. However, she admitted that there was the state ruling party's interruption in her GP to some extent. The respondent also informed that SC/ ST people's participatory role in the decision making process were not enthusiastic. Of course, the Gaon Sabha members belonging to the General Caste was also normally indifferent regarding the participation of the decision making process.

During the time of field survey, Hansa Ram Das, the GP member belonging to the SC community (Period: 2001-2007) stated his view that he had a strong social involvement through various social organisations. He won the election as a candidate of the state ruling party i.e. Indian National Congress. He felt that he won the election not as a party candidate but as a person of

influence and popularity. He viewed that although he belonged to socially weaker section of the society, in fact he never felt so. Usually, all sections of the inhabitants of the Sualkuchi village live a semi-urban life. Moreover, SC people of this area enjoy an equal socio-economic status. The respondent also felt that the president of his GP belonged to the SC Community; he did not prefer her for her being a woman. The major trouble with her was she was not prompt in the matter of taking any decision as well as policy implementation. The respondent mentioned that decisions were taken on the basis of discussion in the Panchayat meeting. He viewed that there is no any higher caste supremacy

Rameswar Medhi, the GP member belonging to the SC Community (Period: 2001-2007) stated his view that his Pachim Sualkuchi GP was functioning as a team irrespective of party interest. He satisfied with the role of local MLA as well as the BDO who assisted them in every aspect. As a three - time GP member, the respondent had a clear concept about the new generation of the PRI system. Moreover, he actively involved in different social organisations. He stated that his GP president belonged to the SC Community and she was a woman. Although she was not prompt at the time of taking any decision, but her role as president was not dissatisfactory. Of course, he admitted that although beneficiary schemes were selected at the Gaon Sabha meeting, indeed the state ruling party members took advantage in this matter. As he informed, about 1500 handlooms were distributed in his GP area. He also felt that the SC people within the area of his GP enjoyed a sound socio-economic status. Most of the people of this section are earning their livelihood in Assam silk cottage industry. So their family income is generally high, further, did not experience any higher caste domination within the area of his GP. He admitted that no special schemes were taken for the upliftment of the SC. The fund was also not adequate.

Bipul Das, Manima Baishya and Pateswari Das are some other GP members belonging to SC/ST Community who have been interviewed from the agrarian locality. In fact, they are the respondents outside the Sualkuchi Village. Bipul Das was an active member of the state ruling party. He expressed his view that he had a strong social involvement. Therefore, he won the Panchayat Election as unopposed candidate. His candidature was supported by the every section of the people. The respondent felt that there was no caste feeling in the society. Most of the people of the under Dadara GP earned their livelihood by cultivation. The area was economically developed except Kateki Jhar and Borgaon Revenue village. No higher caste domination prevailed. The SC/ST people of this GP area possessed an equal status with the upper caste. The respondent informed that under his supervision, construction of cow path,

construction of smakhan, repairing of kabarthan etc. was undertaken by the GP. He also deeply felt that the opposition party members became a constraint regarding the implementation of the schemes. The problems were chosen by the ruling party. When the complexity arose regarding the implementation of the schemes, the BDO interfered in this matter and tried to understand the need of the people. He admitted that no Gaon Sabha meeting meetings were held in real sense. He also informed that although the GP could not supply any necessary instruments to the farmers, the local MLA fulfilled the requirement of them by supplying pump sets. He openly confessed that state ruling party's supporters got priority in getting benefit.

Manima Baishya a graduate woman was a SC GP member from the Dadara GP (Period: 2001-2007). She possessed a sound economic background. Nevertheless, the respondent had no social involvement before getting elected a GP member. She stated her view that she had been facing lots of problems to participate actively in the decision making process not as a SC member, but as a member of the state opposition party. In most cases, she was even not invited to the GP meetings. When the respondent noticed the matter to the GP president, he showed his helpless condition asserting that the GP toed the line of him ruling party. There was no Gaon Sabha meeting held in real sense.

Pateswari Das, the ST woman of Dadara GP (Period: 2001-2007) was an unopposed GP member. She stated that due to cancellation of nomination of the other two candidates, she won the elected as unopposed.

Kateki Jhar and Borgaon revenue villages have about 300 SC/ST households. These two villages are considered as remote area. Most of the people of this area were not economically developed. The major problems of this area were— non-electrification of some parts of this area, sanitary problem, absence of drinking water, lack of irrigation, lack of transportation facility and so on. The respondent Das was unable to explain properly about her experience in the Panchayat as she was not so much educated. Her educational qualification was up to the Primary School standard only. On her behalf, one of her relatives who was a highly educated person belonging to the ST community came forward to help her. He stated his view that some more amount of fund was allotted to the GP for the development of the SC/ST community, but no development initiatives were taken for the upliftment of these section of people. He deeply felt that upper caste people were showing negligence attitude towards the SC/ST people. They were always trying to grab the SC/ST people's benefit and used these to solve their own problems. Usually upper caste people used to think that the SC/ST people are backward.

The woman GP member also condemned that very often she was not invited to the GP meetings. Generally funds were distributed among the GP members for implementation of the schemes. Sometimes, the implementation of schemes was done by the state ruling party workers who were not the GP members. Sometimes, the president of the GP distributed amount for implementation of schemes on party basis. Ruling party members including party workers were given more importance in this regard. The respondent felt that although she belonged to the state ruling party member, but was given less importance. Highlighting this matter, she stated her view that perhaps women along with the state opposition party members were given less importance. Of course, amount of Rs. 50,000/- was spent for the development of the Borgaon Namghar (a religious, secular and cultural centre of the Assamese people) under her supervision. Of course, no special schemes were taken for the upliftment of the SC/ST community.

From the above analysis, it has been observed that the PRI in the study area had to function under the domination and control of the State's ruling party. Generally, the state ruling party workers were pressurizing the GP to take decision in the interest of their own party. The concerned bureaucrats indirectly persuaded them to interfere in the PRI system. Although in some cases, higher caste ascendancy is evident, but the real danger to the Panchayat is the political and bureaucratic interference.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Baluchumy S. (2004): Panchayati Raj Institutions, A Mittal Publication, New Delhi, P-31
2. Sharma Dr. M.P. and Sadana Dr. B.L. (2002): Public Administration in Theory and Practice, Kitab Mahal Publication, Allahabad, P-761
3. Status of Panchayati Raj in the States and Union Territories of India (2000), Published for Institute of Social Science, Concept Publishing Company, P-71
4. The Assam Panchayat Act, 1994, Chapter IV, Section 9.
5. Bhattacharya Moitree (2000): West Bengal, Democratic Decentralization or Democratic Centralism, Manak Publication, Pvt, Ltd, New Delhi, P-57
6. www.rural.nic.in

CONCLUSION:

The country's PRIs of the 1950's were quite different from what are today. In those days, certain castes, communities or classes subjugated the scene of the rural India and others had to obey. That is not the Panchayati Raj at present. Therefore, SCs and STs have to be duly represented, women are to be presented in good measure and an official group is working out of the solution to the superiority of the privileged classes.

The PRIs in India is about the transmission of power of the state through decentralization of political institution. It is about co-operative decision making and participation of the rural people in governance. Both are the means to organise the policy on democratic principles. There is a re-organisation of these principles in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. Participatory role of people including SC/ST through the community groups, non-political institutions of various kinds and the mass media can make useful contributions in initiating a process of social change.

The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act an important milestone on the way towards rural self governance. Awarding the constitutional status to the PRIs has made them a third level next to the centre and the states of the governing structure. Legal status to the Gaon Sabha, three tier-structure of the PRIs, regular election after five year term, creation of an independent Election Commission in states, appointment of a Finance Commission after every five years etc. provide guaranteed basic framework of the Panchayati Raj.

The Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 introduced the three-tier system of the Panchayati Raj in Assam. Although this Act provides 29 subjects to the Panchayats, but the state government has transferred only a few subjects, the identification of the beneficiaries for different development programmes in practice is the indispensable responsibility of the GP. Of course, this has been done by the elected representatives frequently a political consideration. Moreover, the DRDA has been playing a dominating role that hinders the Panchayats to function as self-governing units.

The Panchayats must have adequate fiscal capability and fiscal autonomy. The constitution makes it mandatory for the states to constitute the State Finance commission to review financial position of the Panchayats and to make recommendation. The state is accountable for appropriate devolution of funds to the PRIs along with the functions and functionaries following the recommendation of the State Finance Commission.

In Assam, the state government has failed to tackle the question of financial devolution of PRIs. It has not taken initiative even to pursue the recommendations made by the Assam State Finance Commission. Hence, the major sources of fund for the PRIs in the states are amount received as the grant for either eleventh or twelfth or thirteen Finance Commission, amount transferred by the DRDA for implementation of the SGRY schemes and fund generated from PRIs, own sources. Nevertheless, the Panchayat Bodies in Assam in general and the GPs under Sualkuchi in particular has not succeeded to generate funds from their own resources.

The Gaon Sabha has been bestowing the responsibility of considering reports in respect of development programmes of the GP. However, the Gaon Sabha is only a recommendatory body. To construct Gaon Sabha a real legislature of the rural people, the state government must furnish controlling, decision making and monitoring to it including the system of Social Audit. It is a kind of audit system where the officers and the members including the general public participate in an open system of audit.¹

The constitution of India empowered the government to provide special benefits and preferences to previously disadvantage section of population. Particularly, the 73rd Amendment of the constitution provides an opportunity to the SC/ST population in order to participate in the decision making process through the Panchayati Raj Bodies. Article 243-D of the constitution provides for reservation of seats in Panchayats at all three tiers for the SCs/STs. Besides, one-third of such reserved seat shall be allocated for the women of the SCs/STs.

It is important to be highlighted here that for the first time, the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution has provided constitutional guarantee to the provision of reservation of seats for the SC/ST. Similarly, in conformity with the provision of the 73rd constitution Amendment, the Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 provides provisions for the SC and ST population in the Panchayat Bodies. After the enactment of the 73rd amendment of the constitution, the election to the PRIs was held for the first time in Assam (2001) with constitutional status. So, people belonging to the SC/ST with constitutional guarantee get opportunity to participate in the Panchayat Bodies as elected functionaries. Accordingly, the SC/ST population of eight GPs under Sualkuchi Development Block elected their representatives to their respective GPs.

Regarding the socio-economic status of the SC/ST representatives of the study area, it can be focussed that economically as well as educationally; the SC/ST representatives were not backward in comparison to the general category of the GP representatives. Even most of them had strong social involvement.

However, during the field observation, it had been found that generally a SC Representative was more active in comparison to the ST Representative. Of course, it has been observed that usually the SC/ST candidates could not be elected as GP member against the unreserved constituency.

It has also been observed that although the Assam Panchayat Act of 1994 has made a special provision for the development of the SC/ST, but the GPs under the sample area had not obtained any special schemes for the upliftment of this section of people. Perhaps, due to the shortage of fund, it was not possible to do so. Moreover, the GPs under Sualkuchi Development Block had weakly failed to generate income from their own resources.

The important finding of the study is that Caste Hindus lost their dominance gradually. Although there was a great degree of anger and dejection among the Caste Hindus over the matter at the beginning, they had no other way but to accept the change. They felt that Panchayat would become meaningless if such changes in their competition were carried forward. They felt that these new men and women who were occupying the seats of power were hardly conscious and educated enough to provide leadership to the people.

On the contrary, it is easy for the actual wielders of power i.e. the party leadership to guide the Panchayat members in whatever way they think better. Of course, this sort of analysis is, however not fully correct. The fact is that, there is a need to bring people who are conscious and aware to seats of power even if they belong to the SC/ST sections of society. In fact, there is a need to bring about a significant breakthrough in a dominance of Caste Hindus. The truth is that the situation of the grassroots level leadership still remains far from satisfactory.

It has been observed that political as well as bureaucratic interference was evident in the Panchayats of the sample area. Even it seems to be more damaging than the dominance of the Caste Hindus. Regarding the SC/ST leadership as in any other strata must evolve from below. The leadership must emerge from among its own population rather than being imposed from above by a superior authority.

The Act reveals that the concept of the Gaon Sabha has not been taken seriously by the state government and by a large number of rural people. Habitually some people attending the Gaon Sabha meeting use to express about their individual problems. The rest like to be mere spectators. In fact, in the

name of the Gaon Sabha, the bureaucrats and the members of the state ruling party and some active elective functionaries have been taking responsibilities for the implementation of the schemes.

The spirit of the 73rd Constitution Amendment is to make Panchayats free from the domination, control and manipulation of Ministers, MLAs, MPs and bureaucrats. However, in Assam, they have been playing a dominant role in the functioning of the Panchayats. In Assam, the DRDA has been functioning in the Panchayats area which is not actually the spirit of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. In the state, the DRDA is still under the bureaucrats. As for instance, Funds for development schemes like SGRY are sanctioned to the Panchayats from the DRDA where the Project Director (PD), BDO and the secretary of the Panchayat can play a dominant role. The Panchayats have nothing to do with these schemes. Thus, Assam is propagating the Bureaucratic Raj.

Another finding is that the IAY schemes have been implemented according to the direction of the concerned of MLA. Besides, the development mechanism parallelly had done by the centre and the state government within the Panchayat areas under a variety of schemes also decline the importance of the new generation of Panchayati Raj. The PRIs in the study area is under the full control, domination as well as the manipulation of the state ruling party. Most of the respondent of the study area stated their view that without state ruling party's help, it is certainly not possible to continue the Panchayats activity smoothly. It is also not an exaggeration to say that the PRIs were fiscally dependent on grants rather on the independent sources of revenue.

The key hindrance of the elected functionaries along with the SC/ST representatives regarding executing their functions is lack of awareness about their powers, functions and responsibilities. Indeed, they have no clear idea about fund, function and functionaries which are the three important ingredients of Constitutional PRIs. That is why, they were always afraid of the bureaucrats and the MLAs.

Another important finding is that there is no rational and logical mechanism to co-ordinate activities of the different tiers of the PRI. It has been observed that each higher level supervises and guides the work of the lower tier. Co-ordinate was sought to be achieved through making Presidents of the GPs, members of the AP and giving chairpersons of these Panchayats representation in the Zilla Parishads. Besides, the MLA and the MP were made ex-officio members of the Panchayat and the Zilla Parishads. The idea behind it was not only to bring about co-ordination, but also to give the benefits of the

experience of the legislators to the Panchayats. However, the presence of these legislators in the Panchayats overshadows the identity of the PRI. It has been hampering their independent and free functioning. The co-ordination between the PRI and the district administration offices or government field offices tends to be weak. This weakens the local support for active functioning of Panchayats.

Corruption is an effective virus, which has adversely affected the health of the PRI. It has been found that those who are elected to the PRI at different levels do not reveal a high standard of conduct. The bureaucracy attached to them is not free from corruption. Funds given to these institutions for development are siphoned off. The investigator felt him the depth of corruption in the early area when he visited the field to investigate some Panchayat activities. Out of eight GPs there was indulgence in corruption in five Gaon Panchayat. In these GPs, the members attended the meetings when amount of money was released against any schemes. Besides, the amount of money was distributed among the GP representatives to implement the scheme in their own constituencies. Actually the long list of 29 functions entrusted to the Panchayats to the Panchayats has served no purpose. It seems that functions allotted largely remain on paper. In reality, Panchayat activities are limited only with construction of bye-lane, culvert, IAY house, Vidhaya pension, Opening of Shelf Help Groups (SHG), Wet land digging etc. The elected representatives and the bureaucrats misappropriate a major part of the amount of the Panchayat funds and whatever amount is left is not sufficient to undertake necessary development works for the people.

The machinery provided for supervision, guidance and control of the Panchayat Bodies has not been effective. There is no separate inspectorate staff that is to inspect the Panchayats. There is no supervision at all at the GP level. Often, it is alleged that there is even no regular meetings of the GPs, instance, out of eight GPs regular meetings were not held in the five GPs in the study areas. It has also been alleged that sometimes, the secretary of the GP in consultation with the president writes the proceedings without holding any meetings and collects the signature of some members.

Recommendation and suggestion:

From the above observation, it is clear that Constitutional Panchayati Raj in Assam, particularly eight Gaon Panchayats and their eight Gaon Sabha have not functioning as self- government. Of course, in spite of facing several constraints, it has some positives aspects also. For instance, the political participation of the elected representative including women, the SC and ST are

satisfactory although in functional aspect the picture look quite dismal. Although the overall performance of the Constitutional Panchayati Raj Institutions have been far from satisfaction, it has at least succeeded in making the people aware of their problems and of the means available for their solution.

However, to improve the functional aspects of the Constitutional PRIs in Assam certain measures which are related to the participatory role of SC/ST population must have to be taken. Some of these are:

- The vagueness about the expression "self-government" has to be removed because the concept of "self- government" has not been specifically defined. The term "self- government must have two major attributes-(I) it is a government, which is democratically elected,(II) it is empowered a function without any interference. An institution of self- government will have powers and authority to take decision independently. In this regard, the state government must have to ensure that devolution of functions becomes as complete as possible. It must not be reduced to a situation where Panchayats enjoy only such 'power' and 'authority' as may be enable them to function merely as agents of the state government.
- Desired functions finance and functionaries have to be developed to the Panchayats to enable them to function as institutions of self-government and prepare plans for economic development and social justice at their level. In this connection, Article 243 (a) of the Constitution must operationalise instantly i.e. a Gaon Sabha may exercise such powers and functions at the village level as the legislature of a State may by law, provide.
- The DRDA must not be allowed to work within the GP area. In Assam, the Panchayats are over whelming dependent on the DRDA. For instance, the schemes such as Integrated Waste Land Development Programmes (IWDP), SGSY, PMGSY, have been implemented by the DRDA in the Panchayat area. However, this is not a good sign for the Constitutional Panchayat Bodies in Assam.
- MLA and MPs' funds are also largely responsible for destroying the spirit of the Constitutional Panchayats. Therefore, these must be restricted with a view to avoid manipulation.
- Necessary staff including the tax collector must be recruited for the smooth functioning of the activities of the GP.
- The three tiers of the Panchayat Bodies must work as a co-operative body.

- The Gaon Sabha must be made as a real legislature of the rural local self government instead of advisory body. In the study area it is observed that Gaon Sabhas transferred to the Ruling Party Sabha. So, to make it a real legislature of the rural people, the state government must provide the power of controlling, decision making, and monitoring it including the Social Audit System to enable it to play a supervisory role over the developmental activities of the GP. Moreover, the power to remove the president, vice president or any other elected members of the GP for misdeed and corrupt practices would make the Gaon Sabha in true sense, a democratic controlling body. Further, the introduction, of the Ward Sabha as Gram Sansad with several important functions in West Bengal has bought power and authority even closer to the people. It is kind of experimentation of a grassroots democracy. Assam can also reap benefits introducing such Ward Sabhas leading to more decentralization of powers and functions to be exercised by the people directly.
- To improve the leadership quality of the elected functionaries and the Gaon Sabha members especially the SCs/STs along with women, it is the duty of the various wings of the Civil Society, national as well as political parties to come out openly. They must fight for more seats in leadership positions. Besides, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) must also play a vital role to train not the elected representatives but also those women aspiring to contest elections. Moreover, male members too must be sensitized to the fact that this is not a male versus female issue.
- Planning must be an obligatory function of the Panchayat at all level.
- Although the Assam Panchayati Raj Act of 1994 has made a special provision for the upliftment of the SC/ST, but the GPs under the study area had not taken any special schemes for the upliftment of these section of people. Hence, it is necessary to take special schemes for socio-economic and political development of the SC/ST. Besides, leadership should emerge from their own population rather being imposed from among their own population rather being imposed from above by a superior authority.
- The District Planning Committee (DPC) must be constituted by the Zilla Parishad in accordance with the guidelines of the state Acts. The members of the DPC may include experts, MP and MLA, Officials in charge of the state or the central government functions within the districts, representatives of NGOs and Social Workers.
- Political Parties must operate but with restraint. Elected representatives cannot be denied the power to take decisions. They must be allowed to survive on mass support rather party support. They must be amendable

to pressures from party leadership. People and their representatives must be allowed to operate while party leaders and bureaucrats may cooperate. Otherwise, decentralization cannot make people powerful; rather it makes the parties powerful.

- Every institution has a purpose and a spirit. The legitimacy of the institution depends upon the successful fulfilment to the objective. The purpose of the PRIs is self-government at local levels. People's participations including SC/ST are strongly implicit in this concept. The general perception among people, Panchayat representatives and party functionaries is that Panchayats are mere agents of rural development. It needs to be changed. People's participation is very essential to make the PRIs successful as units of democratic decentralization. Without people's participation, democratic centralism will continue to strike at the roots of democratic decentralization and Panchayats will continue to fall short of becoming successful units of self-government at local level. Therefore, special training programmes as well as awareness camps must be imparted periodically to enlighten people so that they would enable themselves to participate actively in the rural local self-government.
- The "Right to Information Campaign" must check the widespread corruption in PRIs.

Indira Hirways suggests the following pre-conditions for the success of PRIs. These pre-conditions are as follows:

The first pre-condition is evolving a comprehensive concept of the PRI. Then, it has to bring about decentralization of administrative and political powers in the sense that it has to encourage self-governance and mass participation in its working. Besides, the PRI has to contribute towards strengthening the planning process at the micro level and overall rural development. Moreover, it has to improve the access of the masses (Poor) to the highest level of decision making bodies, such a concept cannot be evolved merely by the constitutional amendment, it also calls efforts in other areas like developing multi-level planning framework including strengthening of micro-level processes, integration of PRIs with planning and administration and so on.

The second pre-condition is strengthening the poor to protect them from the exploitative behaviour of the rich. The power structure which exists in the rural society is likely to exploit the poor with or without the PRI. So, if the benefits of the PRI have to follow to the poor and if the poor are to be able

to participate in the PRI, it is necessary that their position must be strengthened by various means.

The third pre-condition for the success of the PRI is to train the Panchayat members for their new role. The Panchayat elected representatives have very limited knowledge about the Panchayat Act and its provisions, the objectives and functions of the PRI, the dynamics rural society and growth potential of their area. So, it is necessary to train them if they to make Panchayati Raj successful.

The fourth pre-condition is about preparing developmental administration for the Panchayat. So, bureaucracy must be committed to the PRI. The PRI must be provided with administrative help that has prime loyal towards them which has the required expertise to support their activities.²

If all these steps are implemented seriously, then it can be hoped that Assam would also become a best example of the PRI in future. But, it will mostly depend on the "political Will" of the state government. In fact, any amount of legal reform will not bear any fruit unless there is adequate "political Will" to achieve them. Awareness at the mass level and a continuous vigilance are required Local self -government and people empowerment must be continuously mandated.

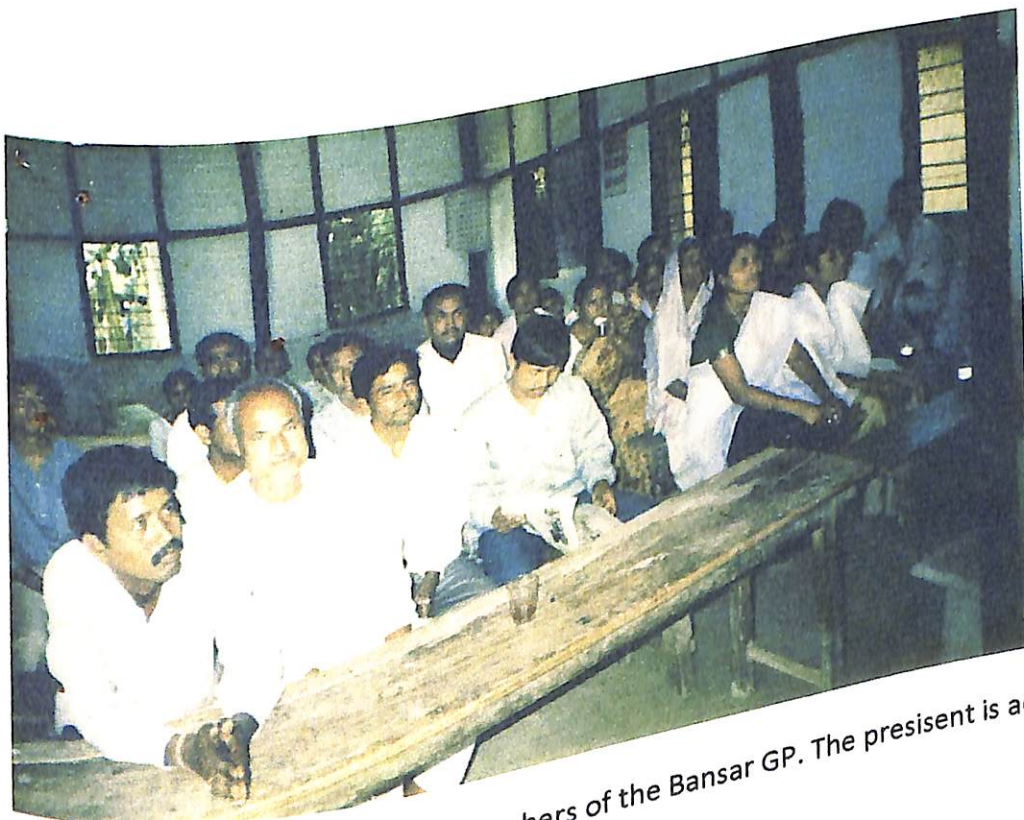
To sum up, the Constitutional Panchayat Bodies in Assam, particularly the GPs under the Sualkuchi Development Block has not been functioning as self-governing units. In this regard, lack of political will of the state government, bureaucratic, dominance and manipulation, ignorance and indifference attitude of the elected functionaries as well as mass people is evident. However, the representation belonging to the SC/ST population in the GPs under the study area is encouraging. But, in the functional aspect, it has failed. It is true that in the state, the Constitutional PRIs are still under experimental stage. Although, the state government has transferred 23 subjects through the 17 departments to the PRIs, these subjects have not transferred to the PRIs till. Of course, it is encouraging that during the financial year, 2011-2012; altogether amount of Rs.2 core has been allotted to each Panchayat of Assam where amount of Rs. 1 core each is allotted in favour of the GP president and the AP member respectively. It can be expected that in course of time, the PRIs in Assam in general and particular in the study area have to be empowered to function as self governing units. In this regard, it has been urgently felt that there is a greater necessity to amend the Panchayat Act to provide more power to the Panchayat so that bureaucracy cannot interfere with it. Above all, this Act must be amended to

empower the Gaon Sabha bestowing the power of controlling and monitoring apart from the power to discuss debate and decide issues vital to their locality and themselves.

NOTES AND REFERENCES:

1. Rejuvenating Republic through Local Government ,Vol.-I,No.,2003,P-90
- 2.Narang A.S.(2000):Gitanjali Publishing House , New Delhi,P-301

A Gaon Sabha meeting was going on

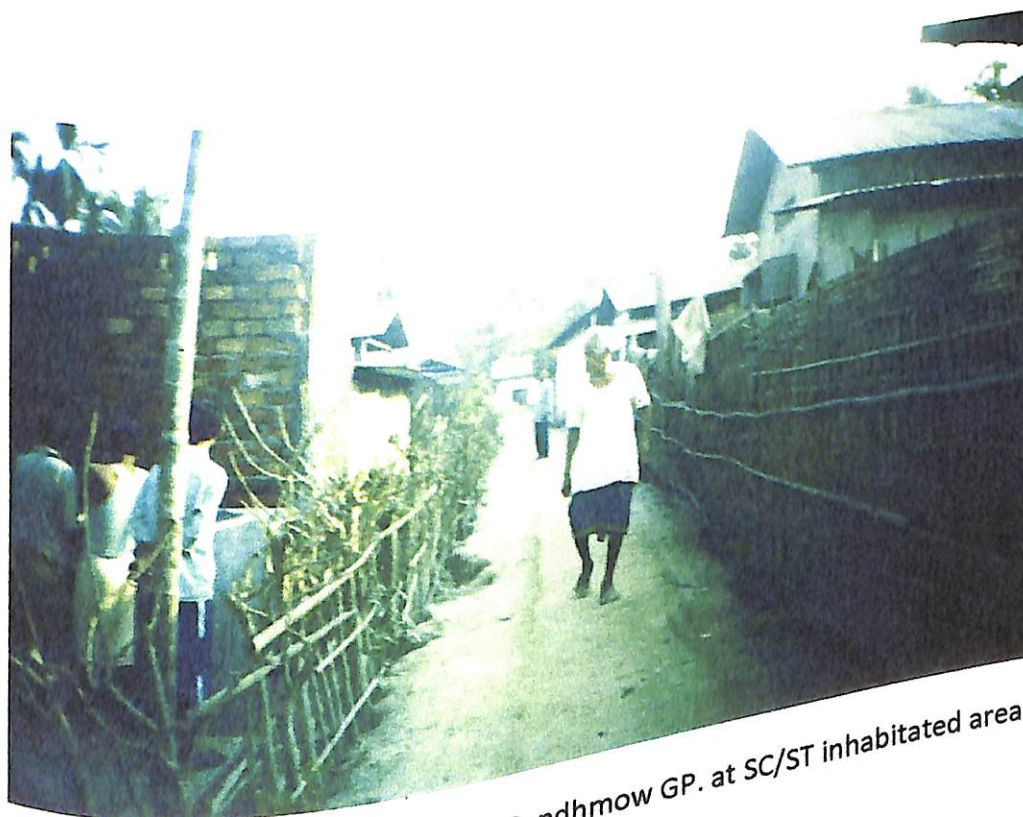


Members of the Bansar GP. The president is addressing the

See



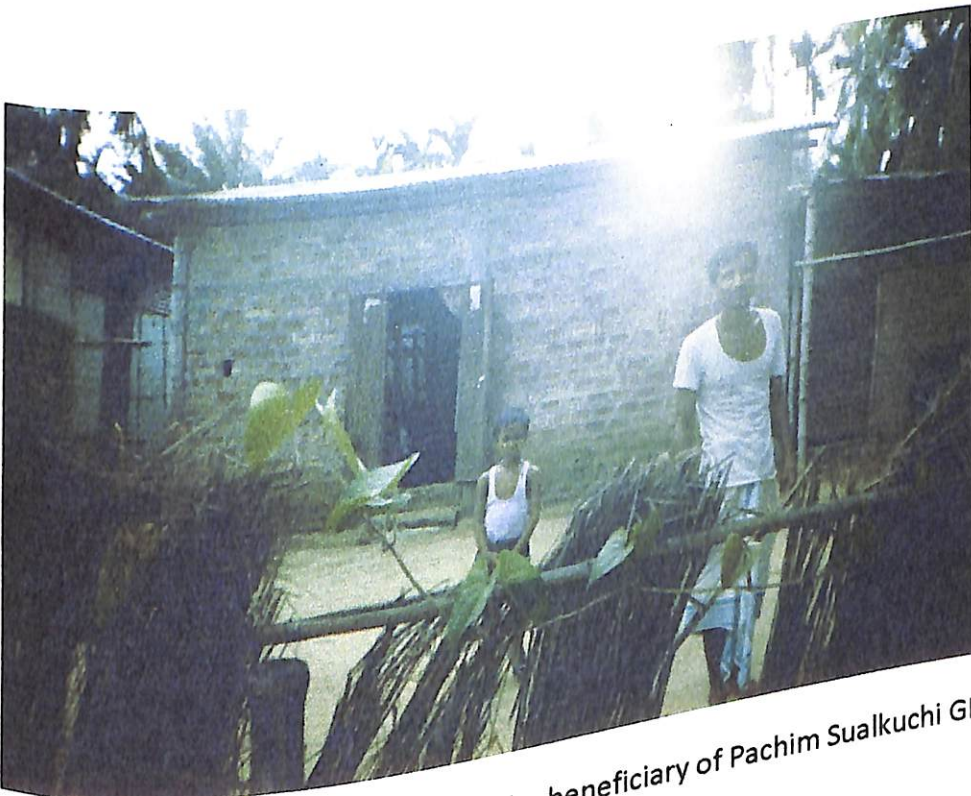
Earth Filling of a Kuccha bye lane by the Gandhmow GP at SC/ST inhabited area. The standing Parson was the Vice President belonging to the ST Community.



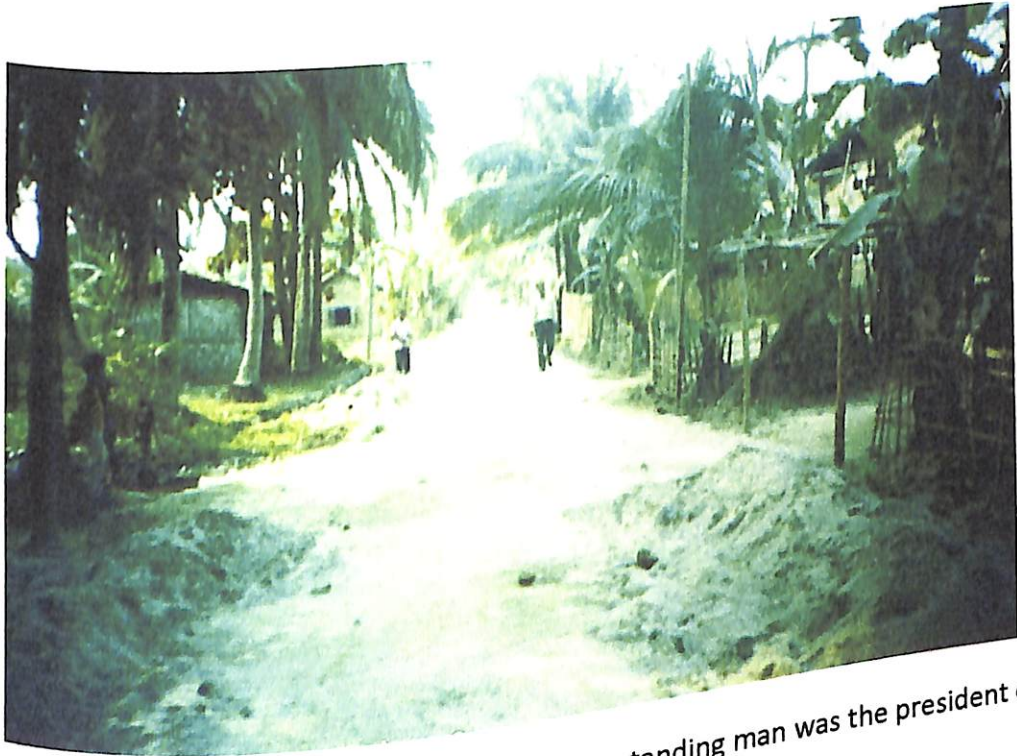
Gandhmow GP. at SC/ST inhabited area



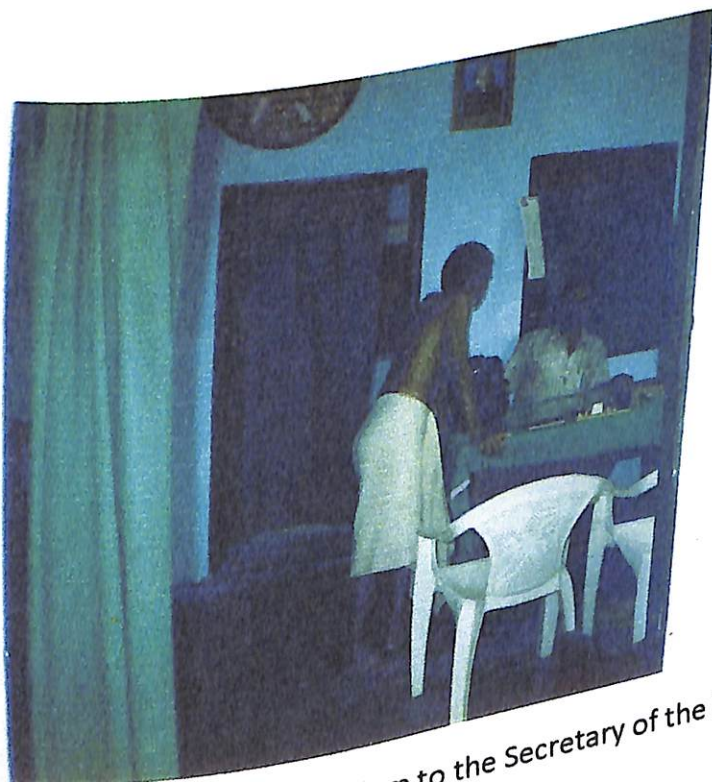
Tube well constructed by the Dadara GP at ST inhabited village. The standing man and the woman (SC) were the Secretary and the Gaon Sabha member of the GP respectively.



beneficiary of Pachim Sualkuchi GP.



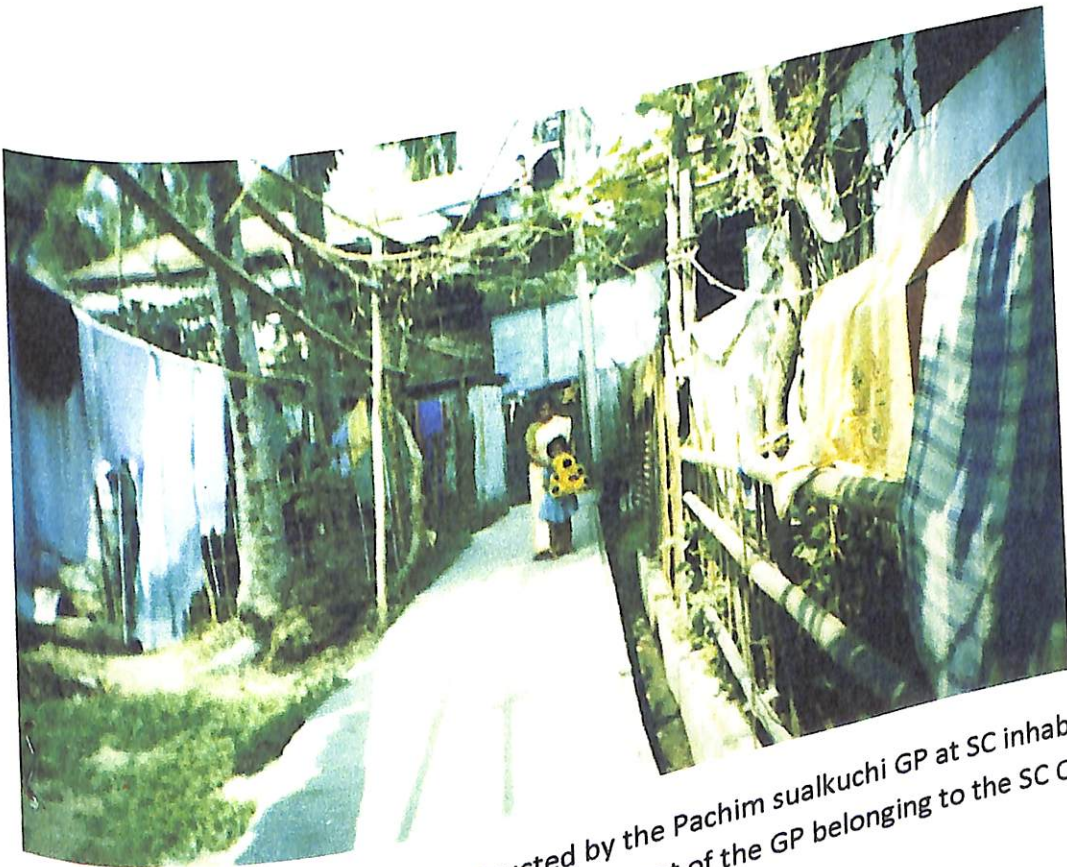
Earth Filling of a Kuccha bye lane by the Bansar GP. The standing man was the president of the GP.



... to the Secretary of the Madhya Sualkuchi GP.



Tube Well constructed by the Gandhmow GP at SC/ST inhabited area



Pucca bye lane along with a pucca drain constructed by the Pachim sualkuchi GP at SC inhabited area of Sualkuchi village. The standing woman was the president of the GP belonging to the SC Community.

Appendix-I

Implementation of some schemes by the Paschim Sualkuchi GP:

- Construction of Brick soil from in front of Bathan Syamrai Satra to the fishery-Cost-Rs. 40,000/-
- Road from PWD road to Shrihati Bathan High School-Cost – Rs.22,200/-
- Repairing of No.2 'Ring Well' at Shrihati Madhaya Supa- Cost- Rs. 30,000/-
- Construction of Road from from Shrihati Bihubari to Gararkhia Than (North)-Cost- Rs 18,200/-
- Repairing of Gararkhia School House –Cost of Rs.20,000/-
- Construction of Culvert cum Land development at joint road at North Sideswari and Kanchan Nagar –Cost Rs. 32,200/-
- Brick soil of Dekabapu Satra, Namghar (North Road)- Cost Rs.16,825/-
- Construction of drain from in front of Shrihati Namghar(North Side)- Cost Rs.33000/-
- Construction of Mini Culvert at Santi toll Cost Rs.33,000/-
- Construction of drain from Hatisatra to the end of the Hatisatra – Cost.9,156/-
- Cooking Shed at No.505 Bathan L.P. School. Cost.-15,000/-
- Cooking shed at Bapuji L.P.School –Cost Rs.15,000/-
- Cooking Shed at Shrihati Syamray L.P. School- Cost Rs. 15,000/-
- Cooking Shed at Gobardhan L.P. School Cost Rs.15,000/-
- Tube well at Trikal Mandir of Lakhminath Nagar- Cost Rs,8,000/-
- Ringwell at Shrihati village- cost Rs. 37,200/-
- Tara Pump at Gaon Panchayat Office- Cost Rs.22,800/-
- Tara Pump at Rajghar Village- Cost Rs.22,800/-
- Ringwell at Kahibari Supa- Cost Rs.30,000/-
- Tara Pump at Medhi toll –Cost Rs. 20,000/-
- Tara Pump at Santi toll- Cost Rs.20,000/-
- Tara Pump at Padma Ram Kakati Path- Cost Rs.20,00/- etc.

(Source of data: The Office of the Pachim Sualkuchi GP)

Appendix –II

Implementation of Some schemes by the Pub Sualkuchi GP:

- Brick soiling at Sang Path-Cost Rs.25,00/-
- Construction of High School Road- Cost Rs.25,000/-
- Construction Samva toll path-Cost Rs. 20,000/-
- Construction of High School road's Paki drain- Cost Rs.40,000/-

- Construction of in front of no. 61 L.P. school's Mati Parbat Path- Cost Rs. 25,000/-
- Earth dressing at Hill area- Cost Rs.25,000/-
- Earth Filling at Sankarpur Path- Cost Rs.25,000/-
- Earth filling at Milanpur path- Cost Rs.90,000/-(approximately)
- Cover Culvert at Chandrapur path- Cost.Rs.25,000/-
- Paki drain at Jutinagar path- Cost-Rs.90,000/-
- Brick soiling at Medhi toll path- Cost Rs.90,000/-
- Paki drain at Siva Mondir approach Road Sepal Bat-Cost Rs.90,000/-
- Earth Filling at Hari Mondir -Cost Rs.90,000/-
- Brick soiling at Bamunpara path- Cost40,000/-
- Construction of Panchayat Office- Cost Rs.1,40,000/-
- Construction of Paki Namghar at Santi toll path- Cost Rs.78,000/=
- Construction of Paki Namghar at Luitpar pathRight Side) - Cost Rs.80,000/-
- Construction of Paki Namghar at Luitpar path(Left Side)-Cost Rs.76,000/-
- One Tube Well at Ward No. 1 under Pub Sualkuchi G.P.- Cost Rs.14,800/-
- Construction of Community Hall at Chandrapur (Ward No. 7) under Bamun Sualkuchi- Cost Rs.90,000/- etc.

Appendix-III

Implementation of some schemes by the Madhya Sualkuchi GP:

- Construction of Culvert at Naktadal(ward No.1)- Cost Rs.18,000/-
- Brick soiling at Dharamtal bye lane under No.Bapuji Path Cost Rs.18,284/-
- Construction of ceiling and electricity connection at the GP office- Cost Rs.2,19,407/-
- Construction of wall, digging and repairing of the public fishery of Noapara (Ward No.2) - Cost Rs.27,978/-
- Earth filling at the path of Na Satra supa (Ward No. 4)- Cost Rs.15,000/-
- Paki drain from Saru Satra Street to the Golden club.(Ward No.10)- Cost Rs.32,978/-
- Earth filling at the entrance path of Janata LP school- Cost Rs.43,266/-
- Construction of Kitchen at Janata LP school- Cost Rs.18,000/-

- Construction of Kitchen at Harmohan vidyapeeth – Cost Rs. 18,000/-
- Repairing of street from Ganesh Mandir of Adaboi to Muga farm- Cost 15,000/-
- Constructio of wall of the GP office – Cost Rs.1,80655/-
- Tara pump at Padum Pukhuri in No.1 Naktadal- cost Rs.22,000/-
- Tara pump at north side of Hospital chowk- Cost Rs.22,00/-
- Tara pump at No. 2 Adaboi –Cost Rs.22,000/-
- Tube well at Ram Krishna Satra at No. 1 Naktadal- Cost Rs.7,748/-
- Tube well at Krishna Mandir at No.2 Adaboi- Cost Rs.7748/-
- Drinking water system at Tilokson pathar –Cost Rs.27,327/-

(Source of data: The office of the Madhya Sualkuchi GP)

Appendix-IV

Implementation of some schemes by the Bansar GP:

- Construction of Road in front of Bhingswar LP school: 57,000/-
- Construction of Road from in front of Gopalthan chowk to Pathia Supa- Cost Rs.47,000/-
- Construction of wall at Bansar Gopal Than- Cost Rs.25,000/-
- Development of Bansar Gosai supa Namghar-Cost 12,600/-
- Development of Barbari pathar Bishnu Mandir Road- Cost Rs.12,000/-
- Construction of culvert at Ganesh Mondir Road-Cost Rs.12,600/-
- Development of Bansar Sangha and Puthi Bharal (Library)- Cost Rs.12,600/-
- Repairing of Bansar Tiniali Samaj Kailan House- Cost12,600/-
- Repairing of Bansar GP Office –Cost Rs.47,374/-
- Development of Culvert and Drain at Pathia Supa –Cost Rs.25,000/-
- Ring well at Barbari Pathar – Cost Rs.25,000/-
- Construction of Urinal at Bansar Chowk –Cost 56,474/-

(Source of data: The Office of the Bansar GP)

Appendix-V

Implementation of some schemes by the Gandhmow GP :

- Earth filling at Gandhmow GP- Cost Rs.24,071/-

- Construction of Kitchen at Banglaghuli LP school- Cost Rs.18000/-
- Construction of GP office- Cost Rs.6013/-
- Construction of bye lane at Kadamtali Cost Rs.20,000/-
- Earth filling at Gandhmow Char,s 'Khareji Madrassa) -Cost Rs.20,000/-
- Earth filling at at Gandhmow A.E. Madrassa -Cost Rs.7,927/-
- Construction of Road from Bordia Chowk to Vellamari -Cost Rs.23,000/-
- Earth filling at Niz Gandhmow M.E. School- Cost Rs.32,271/-
- Sub way road from Suren Boro's house to Akan Boro's house - Rs.19,000/-
- Number 4 tube well at Bodo Supa, Muslim Supa and near Gandhmow water supply office respectively -Cost 43,890/-

(Source of Data : The office of the Gandhmow GP)

Appendix-VI

Implementation of some schemes by the Shingimari GP:

- Repairing of Namghar's Sabhaghar of Singhimari Na Paraa Cost Rs,10,000/-
- Construction of boundary paki wall of Bamunbari Masjid -Cost Rs.10,000/-
- Earthfilling at Siva Mondir yard of Shingimari Borsupa- Cost 30,000/-
- Earth filling at Kaia Supa from PWD to end- Cost Rs.20,000/-
- Earth filling at Gorokhia Pasharia Marasuti -Cost Rs/-20,000/-
- Earth filling at Velkortol Adarsha LP school -Cost Rs.28,866/-
- Construction of celiling and electricity connection at the GP office - Cost Rs.24,866/-
- Earth filling at Bania Supa's Namghar-Cost Rs.10,000/-
- Construction of tube well at Singhimari Alikash LP school-Cost Rs 11,103/-
- Construction of tube well at Maze Supa near Munna Garez - Rs11,103/-
- Construction of tube well at Maze Supa Anganbadi Centre- Cost Rs.11,103/-
- Urinal sets for Shingimari LP school -Cost Rs. 14,205/-
- Urinal sets for Rowmari M.E. school -Cost 14,205/-

(Source of data: The office of Shjngimari GP)

Appendix-VII

Implementation of some schemes by the Dadara GP:

- Construction of Dalibari Moncha- Cost Rs.77,559/-
- Repairing of Rest House at Dadara Chowk Cost Rs.32,304/-
- Construction of urinal at Agni Baneswar Devalaya –Cost Rs.50,356/-
- Repairing of Sub Way from Kateki Jhar to Simaluguri Supa Cost Rs.23,000/-
- Construction of room at Aggathuri High School- Cost Rs.23,000/-
- Repairing of Kabarstan of Islampur Cost Rs.59,248/-
- Repairing of road from Dadara PWD road to Bargaon-Cost 1,14,050/-
- Construction of a urinal at Dadara Chowk- Cost Rs.10,000/-
- Construction of Dalibari Mandap-Cost Rs.25,000/-
- Earth filling at the field of Dadara Girls' High School- Cost. Rs.48,971/-
- Play ground development of Dadara LP School-Cost Rs.40,000/-
- Construction of foundation of Dadara Animal Hospital – Cost Rs.15,000/-
- Earth filling at Bathow Mondir of Katekizar-Cost Rs.35,000/-
- Construction of tube well at Dadara H.S. Shool –Cost Rs. 12,005/
- Construction of tube well at Bhat-toll temple – Cost Rs.10,939/-
- Construction of tube well at Peretol temple –CostRs.10,939/-

(Source of data: The office of the Dadara GP)

Appendix –VIII

Implementation of some schemes by the Pacharia GP:

- Digging of natural fishery under Pacharia GP- Cost R.72,456/-
- Repairing of cow -path in front of Gaintol Namghar.- Rs.50,000/-

- Repairing of Cow-path from Gaiontol Na Para Sups to Koilajal river Rs.1,50,000/-
- Earth filling at the playground of Dhingorbari LP school- Cost Rs.11,027/-
- Purchasing of furniture of GP office -Cost Rs.13,117/-
- Repairing of Keotorbari Path-Cost Rs.26,000/-
- Construction of veranda of Milanpur Balika LP school -Cost 16,000/-
- Construction of toilet of Pacharia Kushal Konwor High school- Cost Rs.5,500/-
- Earth filling at the bank of the pond of Borijani LP school- Cost.Rs.45,054/-
- Construction of tube well at Milanpur chowk: 10,000/-
- Construction of tube well at Pub Bongshar College- Cost Rs.10,000/-
- Kitchen set at Pacharia Ram Saraswati LP school- Cost Rs.18,000/-
- Urinal set at Pacharia Kali Mandir -Cost Rs.13,174/-
- Urinal set at Bari jani Bazar Chowk -Cost Rs.13,174/-

(source of data: The office of the Pacharia GP)

BIBLIOGRAPHY**BOOKS :**

- Agrawal Babita: Poverty Eradication and Development through Innovations, New Century Publications, New Delhi, India, 1st Published, 2011
- Bakshi P.M (Ed): The Constitution of India, Universal Law Publishing Co.Pvt.Ltd., Delhi 8th edition, 2008.
- Baluchamy S: Panchayati Raj Institution, A Mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1st edition, 2004.
- Bhattarcharya Moitree: Panchayati Raj in West Bengal, Democratic Decentralization or Democratic Centralization, Manak Publications Pvt.Ltd., New Delhi 1st edition, 2002.
- Chandara B.C. and Parsad S.: Microfinance and Empowerment of Schedule Caste Women, An Impact of SHGs, Manglam Publications, Delhi (India), 1st Published, 2012
- Chhetri Hariprasad: Panchayati Raj System and Development Planning, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2008
- Dey Parmita: Critical Mass Women Leadership in Rural Assam, National Book Centre, New Delhi, 2012.
- Ghosh B.K (Ed.): The Assam Panchayat Act, 1994, Assam Law House, Guwahati, 4th edition, 2004.
- Ghosh Budhadeb: Panchayati Raj- Evolution of the Concept, Institute of Social Science, New Delhi, 2000.
- Hussain Jahirul (Ed.): Relevance of Gandhi Today, EBH Publishers (India), 1st Published, 2013
- Hooja Rakesh and Hooja Meenakshi: Democratic Decentralization And Planning, Rawat Publications, Jaipur, 2007
- Joshi. S.C.: Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Status of Women in North Eastern India, Akansha Publishing House Delhi, 1st Published, 2013
- Joseph T.M.(Ed.): Local Government in India, Ideas, Challenges and Strategic, Concept Publishing House Delhi, 1st edition, 2007.
- Khan Azam Mohd. And Tosib Alam: Financial Decentralization, Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Rural Development in India, New Century Publications, New Delhi, India, 1st Publication, 2011
- Lal Dr.H.K.: Empowering Rural Development Through Panchayats, Mohit Publications, New Delhi (India), 1st Published, 2012

- Mishra Dutta Anil and Dadage Shivappa Mahadev(Ed.):Panchayati Raj, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1st published, 2002.
- Mishra Sweta: Democratic Decentralisation in India, Mittal Publication, New Delhi, 1994.
- Narang A.S: Indian Government and Politics, Gitanjali Publication, House, New Delhi, Reprint,2005.
- Narayan Jayaprakash: Towards Total Revolution, India and Her Problems, Volume 2, edited with and introduction by Brahmanand, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1978.
- Narayan Jayaprakash: Towards Total Revolution, India and Her Problems, Volume 3, edited with and introduction by Brahmanand, Popular Prakashan, Bombay, 1978.
- Palanithurai G. And Ragupathy V.: Communities Panchayats and Governance at Grassroots,Concept Publishing Agency, New Delghi,ist Published, 2008
- Thakur Shabnam: Panchayati Raj, Decentralization and Rural Development,Abhijeet Publications, New Delghi, 1st Publised,2012
- Santha E.K: Political Participation of Women in Panchayati Raj, Institution of Social Science , New Delhi,1999.
- Sharma Bhupen: Rejuvenating Panchayati Raj , Ideology and Indian State, Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi,1st Publication,2006.
- Sharma Dr. M.P. and Sadana Dr. B.L.: Public Administration in Theory and Practice, Kitab Mahal, Allahabad, Present Edition, 2002.
- Sharma Mukesh: Panchayati Raj System and Empowerment, Surabhi Publication, Jaipur, 1st published, 2002.
- The Collected works of Mahatma Gandhi,Volume 90,the publication division, Minister of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

GAZETTER, REPORT, NEWSPAPER, JOURNAL AND OTHER REFERENCES:

- Assam State Panchayat Election Notification Order section 29/2001/107) , November 19,2001.
- The Agradoot, 18 Octber,2012
- The Assam Tribune, 2010
- Consultation Paper on the working of the Constitution provisions(Part IX) for Decentralization of Panchayats, Institute of Social Science, New Delhi,2001
- The Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act,1992

- Census of India,1991
- Census of India,2001
- Dainik Agradoot, an Assamese Daily, Guwahati,(Assam) 23rd July ,2007
- Deka Jogesh: Panchayat and Rural Development Department in Assam: A Structural and Functional Analysis (an unpublished thesis),2004.
- Indian Journal of Public Administration, Volume XL VI, NO.I, New Delhi,2001
- Government of Assam Finance (Economic Affairs) Department Notification Orders by the Governor, No.FF 182/2005/375, February6,2006.
- Joyce K.M.: "Community Structure and Political Participation" –Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Boston Marriot Copley Place and Sheraton Boston Hotel and Tower, September,1998
- Kumar Kapil(Ed.): Kurukhetra ,A Journal on Rural Development, Vol-61,No-6,April,2013
- Report of the Second Assam Finance Commission, August,2003.
- South Asian Journal of Socio-Political Studied, Vol.1,No2, January-June,2001
- Srinivasarju Sujata: Power to people (Article), <http://www.rural.nic.in>.
- Status of Panchayati Raj, in the states and union territories of India, published for Institute of Social Science, Concept Publishing Company, 1994.
- Status of Panchayati Raj, in the states and union territories of India, published for Institute of Social Science, Concept Publishing Company, 2000.
- Zeenews india. com
- Talikdar Dr. A,C.: The 73rd Amendment of the Constitution: Its spirit and its implications(Article)
- The Report of the Kamrup Zilla Parishad, 2006.
- A working of Panchayats in Assam with special reference to the role of women representatives (A case study of Nalbari District), study sponsored by the Rastriya Gramin Vikas Nidhi, Guwahati and the Indian Institute of Social Science, New Delhi.
- Verma SP(Ed.): The Indian Journal of Public Administration, vol. XL VI NO., January-March,2000.
- Women weaver of Sualkuchi, the silk town of Assam, study conducted by OKDIS, Guwahati,2000
- Rejuvenating Republic through Local Government, Vol.1, No.1, 2003.
- Yojana(Journal): Editor, Kouli, S.R.vol.56, December,2012,