CHAPTER – 6

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
Summary:

Panchayati Raj Institution is the grass root units of grass root democracy. This institution is regarded as key instrument for socio economic transformation in rural India. Involvement of people at the grass root level is the most important for over all socio-economic development. Panchayati Raj is tools for democratic decentralization in India. Decentralization of power to the Panchayati Raj Institutions means empower the grass root people and involve them in decision making process. Through this people of grass root level, can directly connect with the governments. The democratic decentralization is popularly known as Panchayati Raj.

Gandhi advocated the idea of gram swaraj which is very timely and appropriate. His dream was every village should be self-sufficient in every aspect. His dream gets success in Article 40 in the Directive Principles of the State Policy of Constitution of India. Near about after five decades of independence, the Government of India took a revolutionary step by making Panchayati Raj Institutions as completely people’s institution through democratic decentralization.

It is generally regarded that the word panchayat is derived from the word *pancha panchasvanusthita*. We find various forms of local governance from the Ancient period. Various references regarding local administration we found in the Rigveda, Manusamhita, Dharmashastras, Upanishads etc. In the Vedic period we found the terms like ‘*Sabha*’, and the ‘*Samiti*’. A Samiti was the Vedic Folk Assembly that, in some cases, enjoyed the right of electing a king while the Sabha exercised some judicial functions. Both the Samiti and Sabha enjoyed the rights to debate, a privilege unknown to the popular assemblies of other ancient people.

In ancient period such institution as “*Gramin*” “*Gramica*” or “*Grampala*”, corresponding to the office of village chieftain were in existence. During the Gupta period, there were regularly constituted village councils to manage rural administration. We found various forms of local governance in the Manu Smriti, Kautilya’s “Arthashastra”. The term like ‘Gram sabha’, ‘Gram Janpad’ and ‘Panch Mandali’ are also found from the record of Gupta period. The *pala* and *sena* rule, in
essence followed the basic spirit and character of local government of the Gupta regime, but further elaborated the functions of local units and added new offices.

During the medieval and Moghal periods, Sultan of Delhi divided their kingdom into small provinces. ‘Vilayat’, ‘Amir’, or ‘Vali’ were the provinces head (R. P. Joshi and G. S. Naarwani, 2002). In the Moghal period, particularly in the regime of Sher Shah, the villages were governed by their own panchyats. Each panchayat comprised of village elders who looked after the interest of the people and administered justice and imposed punishment on defaulters.

In the British Period the local administration became inactive as the British government was not interested to vest the power to the local people instead of them. But after few time they realized the necessity of local governance and thus, in the year 1687, a municipal corporation was formed in Madras. Set up on the British model of town council, this body was empowered to levy taxes for building guild halls and schools. Lord Mayo, the then viceroy of India (1869 to 1872), who felt the need to decentralize powers in order to bring about administrative efficiency and in the year 1870 introduced the concept of elected representatives in the urban municipalities. The revolt of 1857 had put the imperial finances under considerable strain and it was found necessary to finance local service out of local taxation.

The Bengal Chowkidar Act of 1870 marked the beginning of the revival of the traditional village panchayati system in Bengal. The Chowkidar Act empowered district magistrates to set up panchayats of nominated members in the villages to collect taxes to pay the chowkidars or watchmen engaged by them.

Lord Ripon made remarkable contribution to the development of Local Government. In 1882, he abandoned the existing system of local government by the officially nominated people. According to his local self government plan, the local boards were split into smaller units to achieve greater efficiency. In order to ensure popular participation, he introduced an election system for the local boards.

The Royal Commission on Decentralization in 1909 elaborated further the principles of Ripon resolution. But this remained merely on paper. Ripon’s scheme
did not make much progress in the development of local self government institutions. In this backdrop, Montagu Chelmsford reforms were passed in the year 1919. This reform transferred the subject of local government to the domain of provinces. The reform also recommended that as far as possible there should be a complete popular control in local bodies and the largest possible independence for them, of outside control. By 1925, eight provinces had passed village panchayat acts. This is considered as another important stage in the evolution of panchayats in British India. With popularly elected government in the provinces, almost all provincial administrations felt duty bound to enact legislations for further democratization of local self government institutions, including village panchayats.

Mahatma Gandhi was strongly believed in Gram Swaraj. According to him the villages should govern themselves through elected panchayats to become self sufficient. Article 40 of the Directive Principles of the State Policy states that ‘the states shall take steps to organize village panchayats and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them function as units of self governments’. The first organized effort to tackle the problem of rural India was made through Community Development Programme in 1952 and National Extension Service in 1953. The objectives were to promote self help and self reliance among the rural people, to generate a process of integrated social, economic and cultural change with the aim of transforming social and political life of the villagers. Balwantrai Mehta Committee was the first Committee set up in 1957 to look into the problems of democratic decentralization in independent India. The recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee came into effect on 1st April 1958. Rajasthan was the first state to implement it on 2nd October 1959. During the period of national emergency, bureaucracy got the upper hand and these institutions lost their significance. The village panchayats were made subordinate units of government to implement its programmes. In this backdrop in 1977, the Janata government appointed a Committee with Ashok Mehta as chairman and was entrusted with the task of enquiring into the causes responsible for the poor performance of Panchayati Raj Institutions. Due to the fall of the Janata government, the Ashok Mehta Committee recommendations were not implemented. During 1980’s, two important Committees were appointed to look into local governments. G.V.K. Rao Committee in 1985 and Dr. L.M. Singhvi Committee were formed in 1986. The GVK Rao
committee recommended the revival of Panchayati Raj Institutions such that greater responsibility of planning, implementation, and monitoring of rural development programmes could be assigned to them. L.M. Singhvi Committee recommended that the Panchayati Raj Institutions should be constitutionally recognized and protected. New chapter in the constitution should be provided to define their powers and functions and free and fair election to be conducted through the election commission. Committee recommended for the appointment of finance commission and all the rural development programmes are entrusted to the Panchayati Raj Institutions by amending schedule VII of the constitution.

Rajiv Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India, introduced the 64th Amendment bill on local government on 15th May, 1989 in the Parliament, but it failed to get the required support. It was passed in 1992 as the 73rd Amendment Act 1992 and came into force on 24th April 1993. The Act provided for the establishment of gram sabha in each village. It will be a body comprising of all the adult members registered as voters in the panchayat area. There shall be a three-tier system of panchayat at village, intermediate and district levels. Smaller states with population below 20 Lakhes will have option not to have intermediate level panchayat. Seats in panchayats at all three level shall be filled by direct election. In all the panchayats, seats should be reserved for SCs and STs in proportion to their population and 1/3 of the total number of seats will be reserved for women. The panchayats will receive adequate funds for carrying out their plans. Grants from state government will constitute an important source of funding but state government is also expected to assign the revenue of certain taxes to the panchayats. In some cases, Panchayat will also be permitted to collect and retain revenue it raises. In each state, finance commission will be established within one year and after every five years to determine principles on the basis of which adequate financial resource would be entrusted for panchayats.

Decentralization is the transfer of authority and responsibility from central to intermediate and local governments. On the other hand decentralization is the transfer of the locus of power and decision making either downward or to other units or organization. The term ‘decentralization’ has generally been used to refer to a variety of institutional reforms. It has sometimes been considered as a change in the
organisational framework in which political, social and economic decisions are made implemented. The term decentralization has also been understood as a mechanism to transfer responsibility and authority. It has been considered as one of the most important elements in development strategy. It is a global and regional phenomenon, and most of the countries have attempted to implement it as a tool for development, as a political philosophy, and as a mechanism for sharing responsibility at different levels.

The democratic decentralization in terms of Panchayati Raj Institutions was a post-independent phenomenon. The 73rd Amendment Act has made Panchayats an institution of self-government. Article 243G of the constitution envisaged Panchayats as Institute of Self Governance (ISG), which means they should enjoy functional, financial and administrative autonomy in their working. As per the constitution, Panchayats shall prepare plan for economic development. The District Planning Committee shall integrate the plan so prepared with the plans prepared by the urban local bodies at district level.

The success and failure of the Panchayats would depend on planning and implementation. It also depends on maximum people’s participation at every stage of planning process, from proposal to implementation. People’s participation at local level development has been exercised through the formulation of the panchayat level development plan, project coordination at intermediate and district levels of the panchayats.

In West Bengal, the gram panchayats have been given more powers in comparison with powers given to the Block/District Panchayats. They have 14 obligatory and 21 assigned functions, apart from a large number of discretionary functions. The gram panchayats have full power to approve works. The panchayat Samities also perform a large variety of functions related to 18 sectors. The Zilla Parishads have a wide range of administrative and financial powers. They are delegated with all the functions of 29 sectors under schedule XI with 17 other items and 24 departmental schemes for implementation.
In West Bengal, the planning process at grassroot level has some stages from proposal to implementation. At first, local area plans prepared by Gram Unnyan Samiti and this plan submitted in the Gram Sansad meeting. Then all local area plans of all Gram Sansads come into the Gram Panchayat. Then the Gram Panchayat prepare the Panchayat level plans as per Upa-samiti. The final Draft plans come into the Gram Sabha. Gram Sabha is responsible to identify the problems of development and identify the local needs. Special efforts are made for ensuring people’s participation. The most important guideline is to hold group-wise discussion in each Gram Sabha according to various development sectors. After the identification of the felt needs in the Gram Sabhas, the next step in the planning process is to make an objective assessment of the natural and human resources of the locality. The reports of the Gram Sabha discussion, including list of problems identified are consolidating for each development sector in the panchayat.

The annual plan is finalized by the panchayats in the next stage. After the Gram Panchayats had drafted their plans, the panchayat samiti and zilla parisad start preparing their annual plans. The plan proposal were consolidated at the district level and integrated with the Municipal plans. The task force constituted by the District Planning Committee (DPC) for the purpose has evolved broad strategy for district level development. The district plan is nothing but only the synthesis of the village plans. At present the rules favour the implementation of planned activities by the Zilla Parisad. The DPC forwards the integrated development plan for rural and urban areas of the district to the State. The State Planning Board is the state level coordinating agency for planning.
Significance of the study

The Panchayati Raj Institution in West Bengal is regarded as the very strong bodies, which function as real institutions of self governance. Decentralization means transfer of planning, decision making or administrative authority from the central government to its field organization, local administrative units, semi-autonomous organization, local governments or non-governmental organizations.

The West Bengal government provided a 3 tier structure for facilitating direct democracy i.e. Zilla Parisad, Panchayat Samiti and Gram Panchayat. In the gram panchayat, ward base bodies are named as gram sansad. Gram sansad stands for strengthening gram sabha. The gram sabha is responsible to make this institution as people’s institution in reality.

It is found that, though the top-down approach changed into bottom-up approach in the planning process to a certain extent, nevertheless in actual situation decentralized planning till now unable to solve the problem of grassroots level. It is also found that the middle and upper class perople are not taking that much interest in Panchayati Raj Institution. The nature of participation in preparation of annual action plan is passive, accepting what was offered to them rather than proposing the plan. It is mostly, list of the demands of the panchayats. Finally bottom-up planning practically come into top-down philosophy. Ultimately political bureaucrats finalize what are to be sanctioned for proposed plan. So, the total process of decentralization become invalid for that time, and it become again top-down planning process. On the other hand, people of grassroots level can only give proposal but they are not implementing authority. So they have to depend on higher authority, which opposed the decentralization. Except this, political interference in the planning process also hamper the decentralization.

It has been regarded that the decentralization process in West Bengal is very successful. But the realities of the decentralized planning are yet to be studied. The success of decentralized planning is very important for strengthening the decentralization programme in future. Hence, a critical review of decentralized planning in PRI has been taken up.
**Objectives of the Study**

In the present study the researcher tried to study the real picture of decentralization process in West Bengal. To find out the real facts, socio-economic background of the elected gram Panchayat members has been elaborately studied. The researcher also studied the awareness level of the people (both elected and non-elected) regarding various decentralization as well as Panchayati Raj Institution related issues. The planning process and participation in the planning and implementation process also been studied to find out the present scenario. Various problems and obstacles in the way of planning and implementation are also studied. With the above broad objectives, the following specific objectives have been set out for the purpose of the study:

- To study the socio-economic condition of the elected gram Panchayat members.
- To observe the awareness level of the elected representatives as well as the common people on decentralization related issues.
- To study the process of micro level plan and people’s participation in the planning process.
- Critical review of the planning and implementation envisaging two approaches- “Bottom-up” and “Top-down”.

**Research Methodology:**

To fulfill the undertaken study objectives, the study has been conducted in Birbhum district and Burdwan district of West Bengal. The state West Bengal has a unique feature i.e. this state ruling by the left front party for last 35 years. The political awareness among the people of West Bengal is highly remarkable. It is regarded that the Panchayati Raj Institutions of this state is very strong body.

District Burdwan is regarded as the relatively advanced district where as Birbhum is regarded as relatively backward district. According to the Human
Development Index of West Bengal, 2006, Burdwan is ranking in 5th position and Birbhum is in 14th position. Therefore, district Burdwan has been selected as relatively advanced district and district Birbhum has been selected as relatively backward district.

On the same way one relatively advanced block and one relatively backward block selected from each district. From Birbhum district, Bolpur-Sriniketan Development Block has been selected as relatively advanced Block and Rajnagar Block has been selected as relatively backward Block purposively for the study. From Burdwan District, Memari-I Development Block has been selected as relatively advanced Block and Kanksa Development Block has been selected as relatively backward block.

From Each Block one male headed and one female headed Gram Panchayat has been selected purposively. From Bolpur –Sriniketan Development Block, Ruppur Gram Panchayat has been taken as Male headed Gram Panchayat and Kankalitala Gram Panchayat has been taken as female headed Gram Panchayat. Tantipara Gram Panchayat and Rajnagar Gram Panchayat have been taken from the Rajnagar Development Block as male headed and female headed Gram panchayat respectively. Same way in the district Burdwan, from Memari-I Development Block, Daluibazar-I Gram Panchayat has been taken as Male headed gram Panchayat and Gope-Gantar-I Gram Panchayat as female headed gram panchayat. Likely male headed gram panchayat i.e. Bonkati Gram Panchayat and female headed gram panchayat i.e. Trilokchandrapur Gram Panchayat have been selected from the Kanksa Development Block. Total eight Gram Panchayats were studied from the two districts of West Bengal for the research work. For better understanding about the study, four Gram Sansads have been selected from each Gram Panchayat

Various methodological techniques like observations, interviews and case studies have been used for collection of data. Both structured and unstructured techniques are adopted considering the field situation. Statistical and quantitative assessments have been made as and when necessary. This study is mostly based on secondary data but for better understanding of the research work, primary data have been collected. Secondary data are collected from Gram Panchayat office documents,
Panchayat Samiti office documents, journals, books Government gazette etc. Visit was also made to the Collector’s office, Zilla Parishads, Panchayat Samities, Gram Panchayat, DRDC and other related government offices for collection of secondary data. Apart from interview schedule, focus group discussion, PRA were conducted to find out the fact.

Primary relevant data and other information were collected through Interview, Group Discussion and PRA with total 111 Gram Panchayat Members, 61 Stuff Members and 985 Villagers of 8 Gram Panchayats of 4 Development Blocks in two districts. All Panchayat representatives both female and male were interviewed to find out their socio-economic background. Various informations relating to Gram Panchayat such as attendance and minutes books, Gram Sansad and Gram Sabha Meeting Books, Assets register, Monthly, Yearly, and Half-yearly accounts of Gram Panchayat, Audit reports, Works Register, Scheme Register and various reports and returns were also consulted in order to assess the level of planning & implementation process, people’s participation, level and nature of the participation of Panchayat representatives in the development process and as well as in the decision making process. Group discussions with both the male and female members jointly and separately were organized in order to capture the real scenario. Opinion survey, Impact analysis, Force field analysis etc. were also taken into consideration. Apart from the interviewing the Panchayat representatives discussion with the Gram Panchayat Staff members and as well as concerned Panchayat Development Officers and Block Development Officers, District Planning Officers were taken up for understanding the decentralization.

Tabular and percentage analysis, pie diagramme, Bar diagramme have been made for discussion of the findings

**Major Observations:**

From the entire study, the following overall observations have been found. The objective wise observations are discussed hereunder:
A. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ELECTED GRAM PANCHAYAT MEMBERS OF SELECTED GRAM PANCHAYATS:

- The percentage of elected female gram Panchayat members is fulfilling the constitutionally prescribed percentage. In some selected gram Panchayats more than 33% women are representing. According to the villagers view on this matter that those women are playing their role as “Sikhandi” of the Mahabharata. Political leaders are performing their actual jobs in the back side of those women.

- General Caste and Scheduled caste people are coming forward more than Scheduled Tribe to represent the local government. But in case of female participation, Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe women are more participating in comparison to General Caste women. Here one interesting point is out of total eight selected gram Panchayats there are four gram Panchayats ruled by the female representatives. But it is found that those women are just unable to motivate other women to either join in politics or to take initiatives in planning and implementation process for their own development. Female Pradhans depends either on their political party leader or family members to carry out their own activities.

- It appears from the study that the literacy status among the elected gram Panchayat members of both Birbhum district and Burdwan district is not satisfactory. Maximum representatives’ literacy status is varying in between literate to below secondary level. As a result they are just unable to understand any government orders, gazette, etc. They are depending either on government official or any other person to follow the proper execution process as per order or law.
It is found from the study that maximum number representatives of both Birbhum and Burdwan district are depends on agriculture or labour work. Female representatives of both the districts are housewife in maximum number.

In case of political involvement of the elected Gram Panchayat members, it is found that all selected eight gram panchayats are ruling by the Left Front.

Motivation is very essential for any developmental activities. Here to join the politics, local political party is playing an important role to motivate the people to join politics.

Previous experience in Gram Panchayat membership can help them for better performance in development process. It is found from the present study that Burdwan district taking this kind of initiative than Birbhum district. But in case of previous association, with political party, both districts were showing the more or less same picture.

B. AWARENESS LEVEL ON DECENTRALIZATION RELATED ISSUES:

1. Awareness level of the elected representatives:
   - Female members are less aware than male members about the three tier system of Panchayati Raj Institution. Few female members head fist time, this term in Birbhum district. On the other side male and female members of Burdwan district are much more aware about this.
   - In case of awareness on Gram Panchayat, it is found that the awareness level of female members of Birbhum district is not satisfactory where as this is much more in Burdwan district.
Female members of Birbhum district are less aware than female members of Burdwan district in connection with one third reservation for women. On the other side male representatives of both the districts are more or less same aware about the female representatives.

Female representatives of both districts are less aware than male representatives about the NREGS operation. But female awareness level on that is much better in Burdwan district than in Birbhum district.

Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad have an important role in democratic devolution. But the awareness level among the female members on these, are like Birbhum district’s members are less aware than Burdwan district. Where as male member’s awareness level is almost satisfactory.

Female representative of Birbhum district is showing very much less awareness about the running developmental schemes by the gram panchayats

It is very hopeless for decentralization that only below 10% female representative of Birbhum district are aware about this. It is also found from the study that awareness among the members of Birbhum district on decentralization process is much lower than Burdwan district.

Awareness level among the members of Birbhum district about the planning process, budget making, scheme selection and prioritization, scheme implementation process and people’s participation in the entire decentralization process is lesser than the members of Burdwan district. It is also found that the female awareness level on the above said decentralization related issues are much less than the female representatives of Burdwan district.
2. **Awareness level of Common People:**

- The awareness level among the selected villagers of Birbhum district is lesser than the selected villagers of Burdwan district about various developmental schemes like SGSY, IGNOAPS, IAY, NREGS and financial matter like 12th finance, untied fund, own fund etc. It is also found that only SHG members, Gram Unnayan Samiti members, beneficiary of various schemes are little aware about all these scheme, but middle class and upper class men and women service holders are not aware about this entire theme in both Birbhum and Burdwan district.

- It appears from the present study that maximum villagers of both Birbhum and Burdwan district either don’t know or partly known about the planning and implementation related issues like their role in gram sabha and gram sansad meeting, their role in planning and implementation process, running governmental schemes and income source of gram Panchayat and expenditure head. So for whom this decentralization, they are not aware about their role, responsibilities and this process. And it is not so hopeful for decentralization process.

C. **PLANNING PROCESS AND PARTICIPATION:**

- It is came to know from the study that the planning process i.e. Gram unnayan samiti made plans that goes to the gram sansad meeting and after approval at the meeting the final plans from the sansad goes to the gram Panchayat. Then the gram Panchayat consolidates all the sansad level plans as per sub committee. And the consolidated scheme list goes to the gram sabha meeting for finalization on the basis of priority. Gram Panchayat makes annual action plans on the basis of the approved plans of Gram Sabha. Here in Birbhum district maintains the actual planning and budget making process where as district Burdwan is not maintaining the actual budget making process.
To ensure the people’s participation in planning and implementation process, gram sabha and gram sansad meeting are arranged by the gram panchayats. Prescribed percentage of corrum is an essential criterion to hold those meeting. But in the study area it is found that the total attendance is fulfilling the corrum but the female attendance is far away from the prescribed corrum. It is also found after verification of attendance of participating members that in both Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad meeting, only few SHG members, beneficiary of various schemes, are attending these meeting for their own interest. It also came to known that huge corrum depends on special announcement of profitable scheme.

D. SCENARIO OF GRAM PANCHAYAT PLANNING AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION:

- Average collection of Panchayat tax is more in Burdwan district than in Birbhum district, but over all Birbhum district generated more own fund than Burdwan district in three financial year. Here one important thing is that, Ruppur Gram Panchayat of Birbhum district is one of the highest own fund generated Gram Panchayat among the West Bengal.

- It is found from the study area that, there are some gram Panchayats where no data have been found about number of scheme that is taken by the sansad but there are some plans included in the AAP and also few scheme executed in the respective gram sansad. So from the above picture it is clear that sansad level plans have no value at the time of making Annual Action Plan. Gram Panchayat members of both Birbhum and Burdwan district are taking decision about schemes and they are also taking decision on execution of the scheme.

- It appears from the present study that the sector wise scheme taking and execution is increasing in both Birbhum and Burdwan district. But
the percentage of execution is higher in Burdwan. It is also found that Burdwan district is taking minimum initiatives in agricultural infrastructure and other sector development where Birbhum is also taking initiative in women and child development and industrial development along with agriculture infrastructure and others sector.

- Panchayat are not getting their estimated budget. In case of SGRY or NREGS they are trying to expend maximum percentage in scheme execution but in case of 12th Finance Commission or Untied Fund, most of the time, panchayats are receiving the allocated money at the end of the financial year and they are unable to expend maximum amount within few (2-3) months of execution of the scheme.

- It is found from the study that, Burdwan district is relatively advanced district. Infrastructure development of this district is already in a well position and that is why, the scope for infrastructure development is less than Birbhum district.

- From the present study it is known that the average percentage of expenditure level is higher in Burdwan district. In some cases the panchayats of Burdwan district’s expenditure level exceed than the received amount. The extra expenditure have been adjusted from their own fund.

- Political clashes among the present political parties and their interferences in the planning and implementation process is hampering the entire development process. If ruling party is taking some schemes for execution, the opponent party members are opposing those schemes. As a result no scheme is executing properly.

- Bureaucratic unwillingness is also hampering the entire planning and implementation process. There is a provision for attendance of government official at the time of gram sansad and gram sabha
meeting but the government official attendance in those meeting is very rare.

- Any financial year is regarded from 1st April to 31st March. But it is also found that gram panchayats are receiving the schematic fund at the last quarter of the financial year. As a result, gram panchayats are unable to expend all the money within few 3-4 months of that financial year and can not send the utilization certificate in time.

**Concluding Observation:**

Decentralized planning is defined as that form of planning where the task of formulating adopting executing and supervising the plan is placed not only by central authority but also by different planning authority of appropriate levels. In this method of planning, regional or local bodies are given greater freedom of formulate and implement the plan. Planning in India is decentralized since planning is done at central, state, district, block and Panchayat level. Decentralization of planning process makes planning more meaningful. Functions are to be performed at appropriate level where it can be done with greater efficiency.

It has appeared from the present study that after 73rd amendment of the constitution there is a provision for the reservation for SC, ST and women. The objective behind this reservation is to uplift the social status of the deprived rural people. It is found from the study area that there are near about 40% women and more than 50% representatives from SC and ST group are representing in the gram Panchayat. But it is found that those people are coming through the reservation they are not suitable for the job. Not only that, the occupation of these representatives are either labour or cultivators and also their education status not up to the mark. Gram Panchayat members of the study area are either depending on family members or local political leaders to carry out their jobs. Due to poor socio-economic background, gram Panchayat representatives are unable to think properly for overall development of their locality. Due to the lack of proper education, the members are poor in planning and implementation of the various schemes.
The present study also shows that the awareness level of the gram Panchayat representatives as well as common villagers are not up to the mark. Gram Panchayat members of the selected study area are till unaware about the activities of gram Panchayat related various issues like its operational structure, necessity of gram sabha and gram sansad meeting, various schemes which running through the gram Panchayat. In case of common people it is found that only some marginalized beneficiary are taking interest in the activity of the gram Panchayat but the middle class and upper class people are just ignoring this institution. Due to low level of awareness, common people are not participating in the planning and implementation process. Poor thinking of the common people is ultimately hampering the entire decentralization process which is not desirable in democracy. Middle class and upper class people are looking at the direct benefit like cash or kind support instead of overall development.

People’s participation is very important objective of Decentralization but people are still unaware about their role and responsibilities. Panchayat can not be people’s institution until the politician also realize about the necessity of the participation of the grass root level people. Local politicians are making fake corum to avoid any kind of unwanted situations from the upper level. So the record of participation of the people in the various meetings is good but in reality, it is different.

In case of planning and implementation of the schemes in gram Panchayat, there are lot of political, financial, and beurocratic problems. Political interferences in the development process are hampering the entire development process. In the new decentralization process there is space for the common people that they can directly connect with the government and they can solve their own need at the local level by involving themselves in the planning and implementation process of the gram Panchayat. But low level of awareness, political clashes, beurocratic unwillingness all are making barrier in the way of the democratic decentralization.

Gram Sabha and Gram Sansad is the main media of linkage in between common people and government. Through these meetings common people can directly involve in the planning and implementation process of the gram Panchayat but the present study indicating that the common people are just avoid to attending
those meetings. Politicians are also interfering for their own benefit. They are overlooking the ultimate development. They are looking their own development. On behalf of the villagers, local politicians are taking decision about the local level planning and implementation. If, the systems like Gram Sabha & Gram Sansad can function properly and can enforce their power & responsibilities, then the Gram Panchayats will become ‘Self-Sufficient’.

In the decentralization process there should be devolution of fund, function and functionaries. It is also found from the present study that, planning and implementation is occurring up to a certain limit but financially gram panchayats are depending on the upper tier. Yet though the gram panchayats are generating their own fund but this is not sufficient for the gram Panchayat. Free flow of fund and financial autonomy is still miles distance from the gram panchayats.

From this study it is clear that some strategy and process of planning has started through Bottom- Up approach by involving the people. But in reality, the planning and implementation process is still now a Top-Down approach. Successful planning and implementation of development programmes require adequate funds, effective people’s participation, appropriate policy framework and effective delivery mechanism. After 73rd and 74th Amendment, Government is trying to change the planning process by adopting bottom up approach. But due to financial limitation, low peoples participation, local political influence in administration hinders the way of success. Most of the time the plans prepared by the villagers are not implemented properly at grass root level. Through this study it has been observed that the plans are good on paper but are rarely good in implementation. Though, the newly decentralized rural system is ushering a lot of hope, but still lacks proper implementation. To achieve success in the decentralized planning process the people have to realize their role and responsibilities on every stages of development process.

The main conclusion can derive from the present study that, yet the decentralization process in West Bengal is much better than other states of India. Few people are getting various schematic supports and over all Panchayati Raj Institution working as a real three tier institution. But this institution as well as entire decentralization process will become a real institution for grass root people only if the
common people, local politicians, government staff members can understand their role and responsibilities and necessity of this institution and decentralization process. Then only Panchayati Raj Institution as well as Decentralization process will become a system of the people, by the people and for the people.

**Recommendation:**

On the basis of observation of the study, the following measures may be adopted for the betterment the performance of the Panchayati Raj Institution as well as decentralization process:

1. It appears from the entire study that most of the elected gram Panchayat members are coming from the socio-economically poor groups. The level of education is very poor. Panchayati raj operation needs very efficient and skilled persons to operate the decentralization process. So, there should be some landmark for educational qualification for the elected gram Panchayat members. Educational level may help them to understand the whole process of decentralization.

2. As we know that there is one third women reservation in each gram Panchayat. But it appears from the study that the active women participation is very much poor. Women members are working as dummy representatives. So the capacity building for the women regarding decision making is very necessary. Capacity building and hand holding training can be arrange before the election, and only capable and confident women should participate in the gram Panchayat election.

3. It is also appears from the study that the political party or party leaders are taking much more initiatives to motivate the rural people to join in the politics. Politicians are generally choosing their preferable candidate instead of capable person. Gram Panchayat official as well as villagers should take more initiative to elect capable person as a gram Panchayat member instead of political attachment.
4. A mass awareness generation campaign should be arranged for the villagers before the gram Panchayat election so that they can choose authentic person who can understand their exact needs not own profit.

5. After election there should be awareness generation camps for the elected gram Panchayat members about history of Panchayati Raj Institution, it’s activity and operation process, running scheme details, three tire system, reservation and other important issued related to PRIs and decentralization. That they may be capable to take decision by themselves without any help from the political leaders or government officials.

6. It also appears from the present study that the awareness levels of the villagers are also very low. To enhance the awareness level of the villagers regarding their role, responsibilities and entire panchayati raj system huge awareness generation campaign through camps, door to door campaign should be organized.

7. It is very necessary to involve the middle and upper class people with the PRIs. Their concept that the PRI is an institution for the dalit people. This concept has to be changed. They should understand indirect benefit which they are availing from the panchayats. To do so few supportive programme should launched.

8. Government programme should launch on the basis of class instead of caste.

9. Government official should be more clean and authentic in case of beneficiary selection. Upper level government official should incorporate with the local VOs for proper implementation of the government running schemes.

10. To promote the people’s participation in the planning and implementation process, government official from the upper tier should take participation in the gram sabha nd gram sansad meeting and they have to take initiatives for proper execution of those meeting and they also have to take strong steep against political biasness.
11. Government has to give emphasis on people’s partnership in the implementation of the scheme. Then only rural people can understand about their role and responsibilities.

12. It is observed from the discussion that the rural people are just expecting monetary or kind help from the government. They are less interested to take responsibilities without any kind of profit. Always they are calculating their own profit not community development. They should be informed properly about the overall development of the locality, not the personal benefit.

13. The central and state government should take necessary action for timely fund flow.

14. Local level NGOs, VOs should involve with the PRIs planning and implementation process.

15. Village level monitoring and awareness generation committee should be formed to look after the entire process and they should be responsible to submit report timely to the district level committee

16. Government officials may be much more efficient, friendly and active to enhance the capacity of PRIs and strengthen the decentralization process.