Summary and Conclusion

In the present research we have made an attempt to intensively undertake a study on the role of Community Development Programmes in rural upliftment with a specific reference to the areas of Barhampur Block under Nagaon district of Assam during the 10th five year plan (2002-2007). The CDP is an integrated rural reconstruction welfare scheme with a holistic approach under taken by the govt. of India to bring about comprehensive rural social and economic change. The govt. of India has tried to promote participatory democracy at the grassroots level through the policy of democratic decentralisation of economic, political and administrative power with the help of the twin processes of local self government and Community Development Programmes. The Panchayati Raj Institutions and the CDPs are the two sides of the same coin which may promote participatory democracy at the grassroots level, where local people have full access to become development participants. The successful implementation of the proposed programmes launched by the govt. through PRIs and CDPs, depends largely upon the active
participation of the local people and the government as such. The Govt. of India in aiming at implementation of the developmental schemes through CDP drives with the instrumental help of the PRI functionaries. The CDP is based on the assumption that socio economic-development schemes would not be successful unless the village people were convinced of the need of participating activities in the development schemes. Theoretically the basic objectives of the launching of CDPs through the PRIs is to make the rural people actively involve in all the developmental as well as decision making process. Therefore we feel it necessary to deal with such a very pertinent issue with an intention to unravel the role of such govt. sponsored programmes as well as the nature of functioning of the PRIs in implementing such a comprehensive and holistic programmes in rural reconstruction and to scrutinize the nature of change and peoples participation, outputs of such drives, and many other things, including loopholes and failures. Thus, we feel it necessary to make an empirical investigation into the impact of the CDP in rural areas and to observe the implementation of various programmes for the rural masses.

The approach is developmental as well as politico-sociological. The study has tried to fill in the gap of our understanding regarding the role of CDPs through grassroots decentralized democracy in the form of PRIs. We have taken up a participatory democratic theoretical position and in the light of this theoretical stand we have examined the nature of
participation of people in the developmental process through the grassroots political institutions as well as the outputs of such programmes in the rural areas.

We have made an extensive review of existing literatures pertaining to our present research. These studies have helped us to understand the role of CDPs in shaping and moulding rural societies in the present complex neo-liberal democratic set up. We have kept in mind the limitations and strength of all these earlier studies and do our best to make the study meaningful. Our study tries to unravel the myth and reality of peoples participation in the developmental process spearheaded by the neo-participatory democratic movement in India. For that purpose we have taken up five basic objectives and in order to achieve these objectives we tentatively develop four hypothesis which have been tested in relevant sections on the basis of objective data collected from both primary and secondary sources following survey technology.

We have also made an extensive and elaborative clarifications of some basic concepts relevant to modern political theory specially participatory democratic theory such as Participatory Democracy, Development, CDPs, Democratic Decentralisation, Rural Reconstruction, PRIs, Leadership and NGOs.

We have made an extensive review on the growth of the process of Community Development Programmes throughout history in India and
Assam in specific. In India before independence several community projects sponsored by private parties or by the govt. to improve the rural societies. Gandhiji dreampt to establish village Swaraj which could not be translated into reality in true spirit at the time of Independence and even beyond. The CDP was launched in the country in 1952 as a part of democratic decentralization process. Some states introduced PRIs to gear up the developmental process without much success and without constitutional status. However after 1956 several states formulate legislations to establish local govt. as per the recommendations of the Balwantrai Mehta Committee. But the PRI fail to meet the rural popular expectations. Later the Janata govt. had constituted Ashok Mehta Committee to constitute PRIs on solid basis, but in vain. The govt. also constituted the L. M. Singvi Committee in 1986 to bring necessary reforms in the process of democratic decentralization. But these efforts could not yield desired result in the devolution of Power to the local people. These local bodies failed to function effectively to spearhead rural development in India through the process of CDPs. However the participatory democratic movement in the country get momentum when the government passed the Constitution 73rd Amendment Act 1992. This new dispensation has given constitutional status to the PRIs and also provided a uniform grassroots political structure in all states. Along with other states the govt. of Assam also enacted the Assam Panchayati Raj Act 1994 in conformity
with the 73rd Act. The implementation of this Act has given a new boost to the local govt. machinery of Assam. The elections are held periodically, with provisions of reservation for SC/ST, and women milieu. The transfer of 29 subjects has already been completed and the local people of Assam have got an opportunity to be involved actively in the decision making process as well as to become development participants.

We have also delineated a brief history of our empirical universe Nagaon district highlighting its administrative structure, demographic profile, the trend of population growth, sex ratio and density of population, rural urban composition, Hindu and Muslim population ratio, distribution of SC and ST category population and literacy rate. Besides, we have also specifically dealt with a profile of our empirical setting, the Barhampur Block. We have elaborately discussed the climatic condition, physical structure demographic features, and other related determinants. The government sponsored schemes undertaken by the block for rural upliftment including IAY and SGRY etc. have been critically analysed. We have analysed the role of CDPs in rural reconstruction under the Barhampur Block by generating field data in an intensive manner. The Block is one of the most prestigious govt. body in the district of Nagaon having a wide range of jurisdiction. The Block has been launching various rural developmental schemes for a comprehensive development of the rural areas during 2002-2007. It has been playing very vital role in the
formulation and implementation of various developmental programmes through the PRIs. Besides, the Block, has launched various individual beneficiaries schemes for creation of additional wage employment opportunities and for creation of durable community based social and economic assets for sustained employment and economic development of the poor families. But empirical reality reveals that the overall outputs of the development drives were not impressive. We find that while operating the various schemes the bureaucrats and technical staffs express strong resentment about the frequent interference by the political leaders in their official functions that results in the decrease of autonomy of local administration and merits of the delivery system and services. We find that the new-liberal-local small elite and the politicians together have been playing a hegemonic role in the rural development affairs. We find that the political leaders, PRI representatives and the bureaucrats together follow a particularistic approach and work in the line of narrow local interest. However, Panchayats to a large extent are successful in promoting social welfare, providing employment and building rural infrastructure and the activities involve various employment generation schemes. They have been working on issues like improvement of roads, school, kitchen shed, community hall, improvement of playgrounds, water logging condition, drainage system. The Barhampur Block has spent a considerable amount of allotted money in implementing Rural
Development schemes. But we find that political interference over developmental activities significantly effect the functioning of panchayat bodies as well as the Block offices. The Block Development sources disclose that they have been constantly pressurised to undertake additional works beyond the official norms to satisfy the vested interests of the top-brass political leaders. We find that the identification of beneficiaries has not been done properly. The economic development and social justice depends on the mutual understanding, cooperation and coordination between Panchayats and the Block administration. Whatever may be the programme and the mode of implementation, unless the local people are being made properly prepared to accept and participate in the programme the outcome will not be effective. We have thus conform to our hypothesis that Community Development Programmes failed to properly fulfill popular expectations of the rural masses because of the inefficient handling of the programmes by the govt. office bearers including the lowly qualified and inefficient panchayat leaders. Therefore, the govt. the conscious sections, the leaders, the mass media, the intellectuals, the Youth and even the political parties must work hard to ensure better functioning of the PRIs and must keep strong vigilance over the activities and unfair role being playing over the local bodies by the politicians, bureaucrats, influential contractors and the newly emerged local elites, which make participatory democracy at the grassroots level a failure. An analysis of
five years of functioning of PRIs as well as the Block Development Officer, in the Barhampur Block indicates that despite several attempts being made by the government and civil society the PRIs could not emerge as peoples institutions which are theoretically the essence of India's participatory democracy. The state govt. has also recognized the growing distortions in the Panchayat system, which is reflected by the political bosses openly criticising the malpractices adopted by some of the elected representatives.

We have studied the role of non-governmental organizations and the Self-help groups in rural construction in our selected universe. NGO's are non-profit making agencies, which are formed for rendering social services and spearheading developmental works both in urban and rural level. Participation of NGOs in the implementation of various panchayat developmental activities in required for strengthening and promoting participatory democracy through the policy of democratic decentralization. In the district of Nagaon a large number of small and medium NGO's have been functioning and significant step towards registering their support to rural development activities were initiated during 10th Five Year plan period. But among them only a very few NGOs have the requisite technical and managerial resources available with them to undertake rural development projects and to manage them successfully. Most of the NGOs we have found, are left with poor quality manpower to address the basic
rural problems. In the current context of participatory democracy, NGOs need to protect the poor and the subaltern groups from being exploited by the powerful elements. The participation of NGOs in development programmes is a widely accepted notion of the govt. of India and they can spearhead the local development process and can promote participatory democratic process. Empirical reality however reveal that the role of NGOs in rural reconstruction at the Nagaon district is not encouraging. We find that most of the NGOs are dominated by one influential person and there is lack of professionalism in their functioning and management, leading to the misuse of public money. Therefore, the government should take care about the functioning of the NGO's and at the same time the government should encourage people and the local social groups to organise more and more pro-active and pro-people NGO's which can work for rural reconstruction.

We have also studied the nature, status and role of self-help groups working in the district of Nagaon. The group approach is a process of empowerment of people which helps them to take part in development activities at the villages. We find that a large number of self-help groups were constituted during 2002-2007. But more than half of the existing SHGs, are found to be inactive. Only a few SHGs have been involving in weaving activity that too, in a very delicate form. The members were seen indifferent towards spearheading their stipulated works which may
yield livelihood to them. That reflects less social awareness among rural women, though a section have come out freely to be involved in the SHGs which is reflective of partial rural women empowerment through SHGs. At the same time as we find, the NGOs that are accountable to their funding agencies are not at all accountable to the people. Likewise the activities of the SHGs are found to be miserable.

Thus observing the activities of NGOs and SHGs at our empirical setting, we find that since the success of any self employment largely depends upon close contact, it is very important to device a monitoring mechanism by the concerned implementing authority to look into the maintenance of accounts, regular meeting among the SHGs, repayment of Bank loan, market link and exposure and involvement in social service and general welfare activities of the community. The success on the efforts of the government implementing authorities, financial institutions and facilitating organizations largely depends upon the attitude of the people at the receiving end. Entire efforts seems to become futile if the people for who the approach SHG has been introduced, do not perceive the concept in the right direction. Thus we infer that the NGOs and the SHG may actively involve the marginalized groups of the rural areas in the developmental activities and may certainly consolidate the base of participatory democracy in India if those organizations and units run in right directions.
We have tried to understand the socio-economic background and motivation of Panchayat leaders at the grassroots level. Basically we have tried to understand the trend of the development agenda motive and effects of the development and the leadership quality in the decision making process and attitudinal aspects of the beneficiaries for whom the CDPs have been launched in India. Examining the income structure of the beneficiaries, we find a dismal picture. We find that the beneficiaries that the government have selected for their economic empowerment through CDPs are belonging to subaltern groups, economically marginalized as disadvantaged as their basic income source reveal. But empirical observation reveals that the CDPs and its sponsored schemes of economic development of the poor and downtrodden have been failed to eradicate their untoward poverty since their standard of living have not been improved till the investigation. Hence, the government's policy of economic decentralization through CDPs have in practice proved barren, since it reflects less outputs in the rural areas and failed to bring about rural social change. Consequently the participatory democracy in economic sense has been a myth till today especially in the state of Assam. Observing the caste and ethnic distribution among the selected beneficiaries, we find that the major beneficiaries of CDPs are the SC people, while the STs have shared a sizeable portion developmental efforts. We have discarded the myth that high caste Hindu groups dominate
polity, society and economy in Assam, as the poor high caste groups have been utterly neglected in distributing the shares of development under CDPs. Even the Tea-Tribe, minorities, OBC have also got a scanty portion of development benefits. Hence, we have drawn an inference that the selection of beneficiaries are disproportionate to the actual number of their population in society as the high caste, OBC, Muslims and Tea-tribes got less economic benefits from the CDPs. Significantly we also find that the rural leadership is largely influenced by religious consideration. Though from the consideration of caste factor, the high caste groups get marginal benefits from the CDPs from the religious point of view, the Hindus are the major beneficiaries. For improving the Housing standard the govt. has allocated fund under IAY operational programme to build dwelling units to SC/ST rural poor BPL by providing them grant-in-aid. Our study reveal that the dwelling units that have been constructed are far below the level of an expected standard. Thus constant government as well as public vigilance on the manner of constructing IAY dwelling units seem pertinent. So the dissatisfaction and differences among the beneficiaries will prevail unless the elected representatives improve their capabilities and attain the standard of judging the officials in regard to their activities in a democratic set-up. Our empirical observation reveals that panchayat members are prone to serve the party men more than to serve the rural poor by solving their problems. But it is not clearly visible.
whether the beneficiaries have been covered from the BPL poor or covered on political consideration.

We have studied the family background while examining their shares in the developmental process. Today Assam society in gradually encroached by constant silent invasion by the illegal migrants from Bangladesh. A large number of doubtful migrants have been settled elsewhere in the surrounding of Nagaon district since independence. We have probed into whether the beneficiaries are from indigenous Assamese or immigrant family background. We find that the whopping majority of the beneficiaries have come from indigenous Assamese family background and also the number of beneficiaries from Bengali Hindus and Bengali immigrant Muslims families is also not negligible rather proportionate.

We have studied the attitude of the beneficiaries on various issues relating to the implementation of CDPs and the role of Panchayats in rural reconstruction. Observing their views on implementation of schemes, we find that a simple majority viewed in positive sense that schemes are properly implemented. But at the same time almost equal number of respondents viewed either "Not implemented" or expressed their "ignorance" or "confused" to say anything regarding scheme implementation which very crucial to reckoned. Hence the govt. machinery should make local people alert about developmental programmes. A large majority of the respondents have reportedly extended cooperation to the PRI functions which is highly impressive for rural empowerment.
Studying the utilization of allocated fund from the viewpoint of the beneficiaries, we have conformed to our first hypothesis that Community Development Programmes failed to fulfill rural popular expectations because of inefficiency, misappropriation of fund, bribery, weak leadership and unfair political interference by the local elite.

The success of PRIs as an instrument of economic development and social justice depends on mutual understanding between state govt. and the PRIs. Observing the role of the state govt. in the PRI functioning we find that a large majority of the respondents sharply reacted at govt's role and expressed negative a half-hearted comments like "Not Satisfactory" Partially satisfactory" or they are confused about government role. Observing the view of the respondents regarding the interference of the political parties on the PRIs, we find that the top-brass political leaders who aspire for high level leadership positions use the PRIs as ground level exercise tracts far higher political positions. Here, once again we reiterate our confirmation to our third hypothesis that defective and distorted operational mechanism makes democratic decentralization of financial power through CDP, a failure. All the political party leaders play influential role in the panchayats which harm the very essence of grassroots governance. Moreover observing MLA's role over PRIs and Block, we have dawn an inference that the panchayat members having a good political backing most of the time raise demands before the block administration. When the executive officer expresses his inability to satisfy
these demands, these members having political backing become arrogant and create pandemonium in the Panchayat meetings. Sometimes it so happens that the mischief created by the unruly members put the Block administration into a mess.

Observing the views of the respondents regarding the process of selection of beneficiaries for allotting economic shares we find that beneficiaries are by and large selected properly though according to a considerable section beneficiaries were not selected in proper manner. But though a sizeable number of beneficiaries expressed their satisfaction on the present developmental process a large majority stated in the negative by saying that the developmental process was not impartial and up to the expectations. We also find that no audit committee had been set up to supervise the functions of the Panchayats. Hence additionally we infer that there is not transparency in the working of PRIs and the CDPs till now which is a condition for successful working of grassroots democracy and one of the basic objectives of India's participatory democracy.

Asking to the respondents whether they have found any difference between pre and post 73rd C. A. Act. We find that the views are almost equally divided. A considerable section find qualitative changes while equally the other large section found either no qualitative difference or have no idea about it. They express utter dissatisfaction on the working of the PRIs as the newly constituted PRI bodies open ways for sky-high corruption and misuse of public money for private interests.
We have probed into the role and empowerment of women through the grassroots bodies. We find that women have full potentialities, capabilities will force and efficiency to be involved and participate in grassroots politics. Women are elected from all the reserved seats and successfully take part in the rural decision making process through the PRIs. We find that women overcome all the traditional social obstructions being imposed by hard patriarchy especially in the field of leadership at the grassroots level which boost a solid foundation for successful working of participatory democracy. The post 73rd Amendment Act has reflected the emerging women leadership in the PRIs and accordingly consolidated their position in the grassroots politics and hence empowerment of women has been almost institutionalized in Assam.

Finally our study clearly identifies that the Panchayat bodies hampering the development process by not fulfilling the primary objectives of economic growth and social justice. The development process in the grassroot level is very poor due to non-cooperation of elite sections of the people and red-tapism and corruption among the leaders of the Panchayat and block level. Lack of information among the common people about the development process and lack of political education among the common man which make the entire development process very slow. Despite over all shortcomings, the government should make sincere efforts for better commitment to successful implementation of the policy of democratic decentralisation.