Chapter-I

Significance of the Proposed Study

The developing countries have some common characteristics in terms of widespread illiteracy, unequal distribution of wealth, predominantly agriculture based economy, unabated rural poverty and unemployment. The governments in these countries are faced with challenge of improving the poor masses living in villages through a number of developmental programmes and projects. In the wake of political independence and plans for development in India, the expectations of the people about the ability of the government are very high. There has been pressing demands upon the state to provide leadership and to act as the change agent providing the necessary stimulus in bringing about socio-economic and cultural transformation in the country. With increasing volumes of functions of the state it is true that no effective and comprehensive developmental plan and programmes can be carried out by the government alone. With the advent of market economy the role of the state in social sector has been reduced. But market cannot solve the social problems or rectify the social handicaps. State can play a regulatory role in market economy so that the society cannot be shattered by the negative effects of the market. The growth and the role of voluntary organizations are crucial in the process of social development as they can relieve the government of some of its burdens and responsibilities and at the same time help to provide a mechanism of social change. The changed role of voluntary organizations in bringing about socio-economic transformation in rural India by way of developing the innate qualities of human beings, filling up the communication gap between the planners and implementers, and initiating a participatory model of development, is well recognized by the government and the planners of development. It highlights
the importance of voluntary organizations as the eyes and ears of the beneficiaries, the weaker sections of the society who have been left out of the mainstream development activities. Thus non-governmental voluntary organizations as the institutions of civil society can play a very important role in caring the disadvantaged-weaker sections of the rural poor of the society. Nevertheless, the role of the government, often aided by the voluntary organizations, in planning and implementation of anti-poverty and minimum needs programmes in the field of rural development, simply cannot be overlooked.

**Objective of the Proposed Study**

The state in developing countries like India is primarily responsible for planned socio-economic development and welfare. The intention of the Constitution makers was that an activist state through positive action could promote the quality of life of the underprivileged, deprived and vulnerable strata of society. In the process of development, bureaucracy was conceived as capable of, implementing and enhancing speedy socio-economic development in the country. Bureaucracy has become an integral part of the development process. However, the decade of 1990s shows a growing concern over the state’s ability to function as an instrument of liberation of the poor and deprived. Bureaucracy has failed to perform effectively in meeting the basic needs of the millions of rural poor and providing a better life to them. It has been argued by some development theorists that in certain spheres of activity that requires high motivation and commitment, non-bureaucratic voluntary organizations may be more suitable in accomplishing self-reliance in a participatory process of development. Voluntarism is, thus, increasingly getting importance as an approach as well as a technique in the development process. Therefore, one of the primary objectives of the
proposed study is to explore the role of the state vis-a-vis voluntary organizations in the process of development.

The non-governmental voluntary organizations are of different types depending on their structures, functions, sources of funding and targets of beneficiaries. Basically there are two types of NGOs – one is big-structured, bureaucratic, getting aid from government and international agencies and is in close liaison with state administration. Others are the small-structured, committed, people-centred organizations developed from the heart of the people and are working with the people, at the grassroots level. They are funded by the people themselves. The role of this latter type of voluntary organizations is more crucial in the process of self-reliant, participatory development. Another primary objective of the proposed study is to evaluate the role of these NGOs among the target groups of disadvantageous and deprived sections of the rural poor in West Bengal in generating awareness and empowering them.

In a developing country like India where majority of the people live in rural areas, any effort at development should start with the rural people. NGOs may play the most important role interalia in the fields of health and women’s development. One of the objectives of the proposed study is, therefore, to analyse and evaluate the role of the NGOs among targeted beneficiaries in West Bengal in selected sectors of health and women’s economic development and welfare.

Both the government and the voluntary organizations are working in different fields of development. Voluntary organizations are successfully gaining importance and attention of the government. Realising the potential and effective role of the voluntary organizations in soliciting people’s participation in the process of development without which all the developmental efforts tend to become counter-productive, government is
inviting the voluntary organizations as mediator and co-partner in executing developmental programmes and projects. Voluntary organizations are also taking help from the government in financial and other related matters. Thus, a close liaison is maintained between the voluntary organizations and the administration. Another objective of the study is therefore to explore the different dimensions of relationship between the government and voluntary organizations.

**Research Questions**

Keeping in view the objectives, the proposed study seeks to answer the following :-

- What are the forces and circumstances that contributed to the growth of non-governmental voluntary organizations in India?
- The various types of non-governmental voluntary organizations based on their differences in their organizational structures, style of functioning and the sources of funding.
- The extent to which voluntary organizations have been successful in conscientizing and empowering people of target groups in West Bengal?
- The extent to which the voluntary organizations are working successfully in selected fields of development – viz. health, women’s development and welfare and their economic empowerment?
- What are the broad perceptions of the government and administration in West Bengal about the functioning of the voluntary organizations and the relationship between administration and voluntary organizations?
Research Design

Method of Data Collection

The study was done in two parts. For the first part of the study, which was mainly exploratory in nature, reliance was made primarily on books, journals, government reports, and annual reports, other published and unpublished source-materials. The data collected from these sources are supplemented by way of adopting the empirical survey method of personal interview based on structured as well as unstructured questionnaires.

For the second part of the study, the data were collected solely and completely by using the personal interview method of survey research. A structured questionnaire was administered among the sampled respondents for information relevant for the present study.

In the second part of the study interview method was adopted at two stages one at the organizational level and the other at the beneficiary level. As the organizations are working at the community level to empower the rural people socially and economically the study was shifted from the organizational level to beneficiary level of inquiry to see how far rural people are getting empowered and developed assessing the changes in their perceptions and attitudes. Consequently a survey research method of personal interview with a structured and unstructured questionnaire was chosen as the principal source of data collection for this part of the study.

Content of Interview Schedule

In all there were two groups of respondents. The first group of respondents consisted of the officials of the organizations and the second group of respondents included the beneficiaries. Consequently, two sets of questionnaire were framed and administered. The first set of questionnaire
included both structured and unstructured questions that were framed for interviewing the officials of the organizations. The first part dealt with some general questions for all the officials of the organizations for obtaining information regarding the style and mode of functioning of the organizations as well as their target groups, the administrative set-up and their area of work. In the second part some structured questions were included to get information about the process and method of work in their respective field, impact and feedback of their work.

For the purpose of interviewing the beneficiaries who constituted the second group of respondents a set of questionnaire was framed which is related to microfinance, formation of self-help group (SHG) women’s economic empowerment, social awareness etc. The questionnaire included, apart from questions of general profile of the respondents, those for getting information in specific areas of query. The objectives were to make assessment of the services provided by the organizations in their respective fields and the benefits received by the respondents.

Data Processing and Analysis

The two sets of questionnaire prepared for interviewing the two groups of respondents included both open-ended and close-ended questions. The data gathered from the close-ended questions were readily amenable to statistical analysis. Hence, the data that were obtained from the structured questions were first classified into categories and arranged in the form of tables. Finally the data were analysed and measured in percentage to find out the relationship between the dependent variables and a set of independent variables.
Locale of the Proposed Study

The field work of the proposed study was conducted in two districts of West Bengal – one in Darjeeling and the other in Birbhum. The districts were selected from the 18 districts of West Bengal ranked on the basis of human development index.¹

The motto of the study was to choose one district from upper rank and one from the lower rank. The nine districts from the upper rank and the rest nine from the lower rank formed two parts. By random sampling Darjeeling district from the first part and Birbhum district from the second part were selected for the field study.

The objective of selecting NGOs for the study was to select those NGOs which were working with the community at micro level for at least 10 years or more. For the field study at Birbhum district the list of NGOs which were working on health was collected from the DM office and Family Welfare Office at Suri, the head office of Birbhum district and from some renowned NGOs. But most of the NGOs in the list either extinguished, or not working properly, or not viable to be studied or some were newly established and some could not be traced. Therefore, only 12 NGOs out of 40 were selected which seemed to fulfil the objective of the field study. For the field study at Darjeeling district a list of NGOs working on microfinance programme for women’s economic empowerment and welfare under the NABARD sponsored bank-linkage scheme, was collected from the Regional Head Office of NABARD at 6, Royd Street, Kolkata–700016. In Darjeeling district only three such NGOs were working on bank-linkage microfinance
programme. Out of these three NGOs, two NGOs were working at Kalimpong block and one at Naxalbari block. Due to language barrier, lack of communication and the recent political unrest caused by Gorkha Jana Mukti Morcha Movement at Darjeeling hill area, the field survey on Kalimpong based NGOs could not be undertaken. The one NGO at Naxalbari was selected. The beneficiaries were the members of the self-help groups (SHGs) which were formed and nurtured by the NGO at Naxalbari block. Those SHGs were selected for interview which had already been linked with the bank by the NGO. Six members from each group were selected for interview by random sampling method.

Overview of Literature

The literature under review may be clustered into the following context – development, economy, bureaucracy, NGO, micro-finance, women empowerment.

Marcus Franda in his book “India’s Rural Development: An Assessment of Alternatives” (1979) has made a modest attempt to understand the broad contours of India’s rural development and assessed the myriad options open to Indian leadership. S. P. Srivastava in “The Development Debate: Critical Perspectives” (ed.) (1998) analyses and evaluates the development debate and its various models, dimensions and challenges. David C. Korten (ed.) (1992) in his “Getting to the 21st Century Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda” has examined the development experience in 1980s describing the decade as one of crisis, denial and has explored the newly emergent opportunities for 1990s with a new development vision of just, sustainable and inclusive improvements in human well being. The essays in the volume “Choice, Welfare and
Development” (ed) (1995) by K. Basu, P. Pattanaik and K. Suzumura discuss welfare economics in two related strands – one develops the more theoretical aspects of social choice theory, while the other concerned with the application of welfare economics in the context of developing economics.\(^5\) Jeam Dreze and A. Sen (ed) (1996) in “Indian Development – Selected Regional Perspective” focused on the importance of positive public initiatives in promoting social opportunities and laying the basis for participatory growth.\(^6\) Ashok Chakraborty in his book “Aid, Institutions and Development – New Approaches to Growth, Governance and Poverty” (2005) argues that there should be more recognition of the role of economic and political governance in achieving positive and sustainable development outcomes. He explains that aid programmes can play a more forceful role in political and institutional reforms, and can truly be made an effective instrument for development.\(^7\) Mahendra S. Dev in “Inclusive Growth in India – Agriculture, Poverty, and Human Development” (2008) emphasizes the need for economic reforms focusing on key interrelated elements of inclusive growth: agriculture, poverty, food security and employment, social sector, regional disparities, performance, practical issues and challenges.\(^8\) In the volume consisting of three outstanding works “Poverty and Famines; Hunger and Public Action; India : Economic Development and Social Opportunity” omnibus (1999) by A. Sen and J. Dreze, the authors explored the economic, social and political roots of deprivation in the modern world, and the role of public action in addressing this problem.\(^9\) Terence J. Byres in his book “The State, Development Planning and Liberalization in India” (1997) provides a comprehensive treatment of the nature, achievements and limitations of Indian development planning between 1950s and the late 1980s addressing issues which continue to be relevant in India’s present liberalized environment. The author critically analyses liberalization in relation to the pre-1991 experience.\(^10\) The book “India, some Aspects of
Economic and Social Development: The CESS Silver Jubilee Lectures” (2008) edited by Mahendra S. Dev has dealt with issues of social development e.g. education, human development, politics of governance, comparative analysis of India–China development path, challenges in Indian fiscal federalism, social dimensions of globalization and trends in employment and some issues on agriculture.¹¹

The book “State, Markets and Inequalities: Human Development in Rural India” (2007) edited by Shariff Abusaleh addresses the role of social sector planning in alleviating deprivation highlighting the extent of deprivation across states and among social groups and points out the responses of households and their ability to have access to services and exploit opportunities in the contemporary competitive world.¹² The contributors, in “Economic Reforms and Social Transformation” (2008) edited by S. R. Ahlawat examined social transformation in India in three dominant spheres, viz. agrarian and rural transformations of excluded and the population, gender employment and transformation.¹³ Sunanda Sen in his book “Globalization and Development” (2007) examines the benefits of globalization that have reached the masses beyond the selected few and also attempts to highlight the contours of the present order of globalization and development.¹⁴ Smita Mishra in “Engendering Governance Institutions: State, Market and Civil Society” (2008) examines different aspects of governance in development from the point of view of gender perspectives.¹⁵ S. N. Pawar and R. B. Patil in the volume “Problems and Prospects of Development, Cooperation, Voluntarism, Communication, Social Tensions and Weaker Sections in Rural India” (1994) have discussed all the issues pertaining to rural development thoroughly to see if the rural development policies that have been pursuing need further rethinking and reformulation and whether the organizational structures that have been erected in rural
India need further revitalization. V. A. Pai Panandiker, in his book “Bureaucracy and Development Administration” (1978), focuses on whether the bureaucracy has the essential values and attitudes necessary to perform the task of transforming traditional societies into modern ones. John Riley, in his book “Stakeholders in Rural Development – Critical Collaboration in State–NGO Partnership” (2002) describes and elaborates on a form of collaborative effort between governments and voluntary agencies which works in practice, despite a widespread atmosphere of mutual distrust and antagonism. S. N. Ray, in his book “Communication in Rural Development A Public Policy Perspective” (1995) presented a comprehensive conceptualization of communication and development in Indian context since the years of the modernization paradigm right up to the 1990s and the state of communication research in India based on appropriate methodologies in terms of the alternative and emerging paradigms and reconceptualization. S. K. Das, B. P. Nanda and J. Rath in their edited book “Microfinance and Rural Development in India” (2008) investigated the role of microfinance institutions in the socio-economic development of rural poor of the state of Orissa. Satya Sundaram, in his book “Microfinance in India” (2006) analyses microfinance in India in a comprehensive way encompassing the problems of banking sector, innovative schemes of the banks to help the poor, role of self-help groups in empowering rural poor through institutional credit and their positive results. K. G. Karmakar in his book “Microfinance in India” (2008) provides an informative and holistic status of microfinance in India and suggests a road map for the future. He makes an overview on microfinance institutions and focuses upon the challenges faced by the dominant credit delivery models, i.e. SHG-Bank Linkage Programme and issues related to the emerging microfinance institutions. N. Lalitha, in “Rural Women Empowerment and Development Banking” (1997) investigates how far the social and development banking
endeavours to benefit rural women. The author also presents a vivid and penetrating analysis of factors which promote or hinder women access to credit, participation of women borrowers in the management of credit at grassroots level.\textsuperscript{23} Asha Mukherjee and K. Bhattacharjee in the volume “Conditioning and Empowerment of Women : A Multidimensional Approach” (2003) analysed the status of women in India and the alternative modes of their empowerment. They deal with the theoretical issues relating to empowerment as well as issues involved in practice.\textsuperscript{24} Mally Joseph, in the book “Women Participation and Development Strategies” (1997) enquires and tries to identify empirically the actual level of women participation in the development programmes of governmental and non-governmental organizations.\textsuperscript{25} David H. Smith and Frederick Elkin in their book “Volunteers, Voluntary Associations and Development” (ed) (1981) pointed out a number of issues in voluntary action in less developing countries.\textsuperscript{26} John Clark, in his “Democratizing Development : The Role of Voluntary Organizations.” (1991) focuses on the need for strengthening the democratic traditions of the organizations and thus making them the means through which the poor can take control of their own resources and livelihood.\textsuperscript{27} The Economic Research and Training Foundation, Indian Merchants’ Chamber in “Round Table Discussion on Rural Development : Role of Voluntary Agencies and Business Houses” (1977) focuses on the problems that the voluntary organizations have to face like eliciting cooperation of the local community, their relations with the administrative apparatus and financial institutions.\textsuperscript{28} A. K. Kapoor and Dharamvir Sing, in the book “Rural Development through Non-Governmental Organizations” (1997) represent the story of the NGOs movement in rural development in Himachal Pradesh, starting from its inception still its present state.\textsuperscript{29} Shivani Dharmarajan, in her “Non-governmental Development Initiative and Public Policy” (1997), focuses on several significant aspects of participatory
development and the role and initiative of voluntary organizations.\textsuperscript{30} Noorjahan Bava, in her “Non-Governmental Organizations in Development: Theory and Practice” (ed) (1997), emphasizes on important issues of the NGOs like their autonomy, accountability and effectiveness as catalyst of social change or harbingers of silent revolution.\textsuperscript{31} B. T. Lawani, in “Non-Governmental Organizations in Development, Case Study in Solapur District” (1999) has made an attempt to examine the history of voluntary action and structure and management of the voluntary welfare organizations in India and their role in social change and development.\textsuperscript{32} Rekha Wazir, in her “The Gender Gap in Basic Education: NGOs as Change Agents” (ed) (2000) focuses on both the potentialities and limitations of the NGO in reducing the gender gap, in producing basic education and in bringing about incremental changes at the national level.\textsuperscript{33} M. L. Dantwala, Harsh Sethi, Pravin Visaria, in the volume “Social Change through Voluntary Action” (ed) (1998) maintain that voluntary action can be a potent instrument for bringing about social transformation, for eliminating poverty, and for building an egalitarian and human society. They have present convincing examples of successful socio-economic transformation brought about by a determined application of these ideals through six case studies.\textsuperscript{34}

David Hirchmann, in “Development Management versus Third World Bureaucracies: A Brief History of Conflicting Interest” (1999, Development and Change), focuses on the responses of Third World bureaucracies’ to changing demands of development management.\textsuperscript{35} Satya Deva, in “Bureaucracy and Development” (1986, EPW), deals with the contradictions that the theory of bureaucracy suffers from and the resultant impasse.\textsuperscript{36} M. A. Muttalib, in “Voluntarism and Development – Theoretical Perspective” (1987, IJPA), focuses on the need in India to entrust the task of rural
development to voluntary Organizations. Sanjit (Bunker) Roy, in “Voluntary Agencies in Development : Their Role, Policy and Programmes” (1987, IJPA), focuses on the shift in government thinking regarding involvement of voluntary organizations in development since the Sixth Plan Period. V. G. Nandeker, in “Voluntary Associations : A Strategy in Development” (1987, IJPA), emphasizes the importance of the voluntary organizations in development process as a strategy. J. S. Mehta, in “Challenge and Opportunity for Voluntarism in Rural Development” (1987, IJPA), focuses on the fact that in rural development efforts voluntary bodies have to face various internal challenges like factionalism and authoritarianism and that they have to guard against these challenges. H. R. Chaturvedi, in “Role of Voluntary Organizations in Rural Development” (1987, IJPA), examines the role of voluntary organizations in rural development in a historical perspective from Gandhian era to the present day. Udaya Bhaskara Reddy, in “Role of Voluntary Agencies in Rural Development” (1987, IJPA) discusses the role of voluntary organizations in rural development while focusing on different eminent bodies in the field according to their area of specialization. S. R. Maheshwari, in “Voluntary Action in Rural Development in India” (1987, IJPA), has pointed out that the voluntary organizations’ involvement in rural development is sporadic and intermittent. He opines that there is need of proper planning in voluntary action. He emphasizes that the lack of fund is a major problem to voluntary organizations. Nurul Islam and Niaz Ahmed Khan, in “Non-Governmental Organizations in Bangladesh : A Commentary” (1996, Journal of Rural Development), has offered NGO-model, as an alternative to state sponsored development. Robert T. Anderson, in “Voluntary Associations in History” (1971, American Anthropologist), explains the history of voluntary organizations from neolith to modern period and focuses on their contribution to social stability. Snehalata Panda, in “Social Transformation
programme at national and state level, with special reference to Andhra Pradesh in detail and certain aspects of the other three States – Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Kerala.\textsuperscript{54} C. Krishnan in “Role of Microfinance in Women Empowerment : A Study of Selected Experiments in Kerala” (2009, The Micro Finance Review) tries to assess the experiments of the Shreyas and the Kudumbashree in the process of women empowerment in Kerala.\textsuperscript{55} Gopa Samanta in “Microfinance and Women : Gender Issues of Poverty Alleviation and Empowerment” (2009,The Microfinance Review) examines the success and failure of micro-finance to ameliorate poverty, to generate livelihoods and to empower women by organizing them under self-help groups.\textsuperscript{56}

The overview of literature suggests that most of the studies have dealt with the general issues in voluntary actions and the prospective role of the voluntary organizations as an alternative to state initiated efforts for development. The literature is conspicuously marked by the absence of any study on the role of small voluntary organizations which work at the grassroots level for ensuring actual participation of the rural poor in the process of decision-making in different fields of development, in India particularly in West Bengal. The present study is a serious attempt to fill up this research gap in planning and management of development in West Bengal.

**Plan of the Study**

The first chapter, introductory in nature, delineates the problem, the objectives of the proposed study, the research questions, the methodology followed, and the plan of the study.
The second chapter deals with the meaning of the term ‘development’, its various changing models, concept, and the changing meaning of rural development and various programmes undertaken by the Government of India, the aspect of development administration, the changing role of the Indian state and the emerging importance of the civil society and its organizations in the development process.

The third chapter analyses the concept and functions of voluntary organizations as well as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), a brief history of NGO with changing approach, strategy and types of NGO. This chapter also includes an evolutionary analysis of Indian NGOs and their necessity in the participatory development.

The fourth chapter examines the concept of health, public health followed by a situational analysis of health status of South Asia. A brief analysis about India’s performance on health sector and various Government policies during plan period has been presented in this chapter. As the proposed study primarily concerned with women’s health in West Bengal, a brief overview of women’s health condition in West Bengal has been analysed.

The fifth chapter deals with the field study on health and the primary data analysis.

The sixth chapter focuses on women’s development, various programmes and policies undertaken by the Government of India for women and their economic empowerment through micro-finance.

The seventh chapter focuses on the field study on women’s development and microfinance and primary data analysis.
The eighth chapter concludes with research findings and suggests some corrective measures to be undertaken by our policy-makers and political leadership.
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