CHAPTER-2

PROBLEM

&

PERSPECTIVE
2.1. Problematic

2.1.1 Purpose of research problem:

Research problem being the base of any study helps in formulating every step of it. It directs the study and generates result as per. Problematic of any research offers debatable question on a broader aspect of any situation.

2.1.1.1 Problematic of the present research:

Of this present research study, three villages namely Bazarugachh, Tewarigachh and Khalpara in question are found under the same block of Phansidewa, same gram panchayat of Chhatat-Bansgaon and same mouza of Purba-Bansgaon. These villages are in almost same distance from the block and gram panchayat offices. These villages are under service area of the same health sub-centre at a distance of around 5.5 km in average. Communities of these three villages interact among themselves frequently despite distinct religious differences. They have to travel 8.5 km in average to reach the common market and the nearest high school.

However, these villages have their own communication resources- both traditional folk forms and technological media. Social and religious events are aplenty. There is commonality in communication practices among these three villages due to their co-existence and shared past. Differences due to socio-religious praxis since past are also demonstrable. Use of technological media is not an old phenomenon in these villages. Their exposures to government interventions in development are of same type. Still these villages are in different stages of development. None of the three villages is represented by an elected member from the village to the gram panchayat or higher elected bodies.
This leaves us in a fix regarding a number of questions related to development stages and communication functionality.

- Is there any direct relation between the two?
- Does communication condition development in other interesting ways?
- Whether the communication spectrum interfaces villagers and their development only partly or in entirety?
- Is the development sustainable through generations?
- Do the villagers rely more on their self-initiatives for livelihood or more on government interventions?
- Are the government interventions able to be integrated into self-initiatives?
- What interface does communication offer in such cases?

The literature review revealed about success of communication strategy in effecting positive changes in different communities. Yet these efforts throw no light on communication differences vis-à-vis development differences.

2.2 **Aim of the research:**

The aim of the study is to find out status of communication resource utilization in three North Bengal villages at different stages of development.

2.3 **Objectives of the research:**

1) Delineating socio-economic conditions.
2) Observation on standard of life.
3) Observing performances of various development schemes.
4) Exploring communication resources in three study villages.
5) Finding out presence and functionality of interpersonal and group media.
6) Finding out presence and functionality of mass and internet-based media.
2.4 **Perspective of the research:**

Earlier linear approaches of communication usage especially media in development concepts show tendency to influence people (audience) through intended and institutional messages delivered. Adoption of economic development following western development models indiscriminately failed due to subsiding interests of the recipients or stakeholders. Though emergence of dependency paradigm emphasized involvement of audience and equity of information but that too resulted in limited exposure of stakeholders. Following such failures and limitations, stress on participatory approaches emerged that engage communities to be their own development agents. Such concept prioritizes people’s participation through exchange of ideas and actions.

The development perspective has witnessed great shift during last twenty years in search of sustainability of human generations in future and sustainability of natural environment. Huge number of experiments, programs and projects were taken up by trans-national bodies, countries, research institutions and universities from the end decade of twentieth century. These belong to development categories such as community driven development (CDD), participatory development (PD), developing community from within (DCFW) and ecologically sustainable trans-generational progress (ESTGP). The Indian communication concept of ‘Sadharanikaran’ helps in building consensus through interactions, dialogues, participations and opinion sharing too. All of these were intended to make development responding to man and natures balance for existence and progress, albeit to varying degrees.

To sustain development, communities should have scopes to identify solutions as per their problems leading towards decision making ability and resultant action. To make people participant, communication in all possible two-way forms can facilitate such effectively. Sustainability of any development initiative is possible
only if communities are engaged in resolving issues and finding most appropriate application for them that comes in their preferred way instead of burdening them. Several studies around the world has shown failure of development projects mainly due to gap in understanding between beneficiaries and stakeholders that simply points to the non-communication between people. To overcome such drawback, strategic communication is required for which the communicators must have the ability to relate to diverse communities separately following their own knowledge, ideas, abilities and resources.

Though media has been used to promote development extensively but following its linear approach, it tends to fail. However, it can be used to persuade and influence people to an extent and change behavior resultantly. This being one aspect of development communication, media can be used in a positive manner to facilitate change. In this regard also, priorities of communities are to be considered otherwise possibility of failures can be high. Participation of any individual or group entails sharing of practiced knowledge that helped communities to survive on its own terms over years. It also determines the level of external intervention that can be possibly accepted and adopted for a desirable change in the living of that very community. Change doesn’t come easy and for that to occur people should become part of it. Valued messages of any media that can be understood and shared at community level prove more effective than lopsided facts.

The literature review in the first chapter of this research study has reflected that following failures of only technical development initiatives, communication has been used as a mediator to reach out and make people act by making them participants for their own development. This has made them to think about utilization of community resources, be it knowledge or capital to mobilize them. This calls for indigenous knowledge system (IKS) of communities which being a repository of development with much practiced communication modes can be
used extensively to sustain growth over time without forcing people to adopt change. This also shows methods of communication usage and texture prevalent in a community which can be infused in strategic planning of any external development effort. Different folk media forms being practiced and accepted mode of communication to the communities can well be integrated in development approaches to make efforts effective in this regard.

This “Development From Within The Community” warrants an enlightened development-minded inquisitive human force within the community. Belongingness, positive approach, love for fellow members and environment, self-confidence, impulse for resource reconnaissance and respect for traditional knowledge are strong attributes of this human force. For them, development began earlier. They, on the ground, already nurtured by generations or to some extent underutilized over generations, do the spade work for the present and future” (LohoChoudhury and Paul 2001).

Communication being ‘inherent in interactive nature of man is at once a vehicle for knowing each other and a component of culture’ (LohoChoudhury 1998) enables man to utilize such phenomena in a broader spectrum. From individual to mass, linear to participatory, in every condition communication helps in knowing people and their living. From identifying own communication resources of communities that helped in sustaining its functionality to the present to strategic intervention for bringing changes in terms of development, communication can be considered as key component around which initiatives hover. People in making their living real utilize communication in varied but their known ways between and among themselves. However, any external intervention should be drawn infusing communities’ existing communication pattern in plan otherwise rate of failure will simply increase.
Relation of communication with development is supportive in nature though questions may be raised on the type of it. Either to bring sustained change from within the communities or intervening externally, each case of furtherance from present to the next level of improvement of man and his activities requires their acknowledgement through active participation. Such engagement of people can act as decisive factor in development.

For development to occur or sustain, communication is mainly utilized through varied participatory modes making communities responsible and selective for own condition. Starting from Community Driven Development (CDD), Developing Community From Within (DCFW) to Ecologically Sustainable Trans-Generational Progress (ESTGP) being furtherance from sustainable development approach by identifying knowledge resource and ability of communities, communicators engage communication as key component in bringing people at same level of understanding and action to facilitate change mainly by themselves. In these cases, intervention relies upon people in making such development efforts effective. Sustainability of development efforts over time is the main concern in these regards. Empowering communities through enabling them identifying own needs, priorities, problems, opportunities and decision making is another purposive aim of participatory communication for developing communities mainly from within. Each mode of such approach values own ability and knowledge of community and allows to be part of development intended.

Specifically, Ecologically Sustainable Trans-generational Progress (ESTGP) concept \( (\textit{LohoChoudhury 2011}) \) Propounds development of human that can be sustained naturally over generations without harming natural ecosystem. It establishes facts that communication being resource of knowledge and human action has been a natural part of communities. Such resource has resulted in man’s existence through several economic, socio-cultural and religious practices.
over generations. Instead of burdening them with unknown modes of intervention rather such existing resources can be utilized fully in setting goals of improvements over time. Such method can be applied in understanding trans-generational qualities of communities and sustenance of so in retaining identity along with such communication application in developing communities from within. This mode engages active engagements of people in their desired level of change. This concept stresses on trans-generational traits for sustaining progress rather than mere participation for any time bound objective to achieve in terms of growth.

To solve the reasons of backwardness, communities should be judged on available resources to them and utilization of such. External effort can only be effective if it adopts peoples’ way by acknowledging their capacity. Resources of communities can well be utilized for the upliftment of their livelihoods as well as society and nation in turn. This alternative development approach being flexible can be implemented following diversities of communities keeping their socio-cultural ethnicities intact by waving off any single irresponsive identical technique. The stress is more on growth from inside of the community by utilizing indigenous knowledge resource of several practices than resting on externally driven policies and agencies.

Identification of own need and ‘perception’ (LochoChoudhury 2011) of being and becoming of communities is what it demands for. Communication being natural of human action can be utilized for making differences. IKS and folk media in this case can play key role in realizing improvements from within the communities. Technological media can also be helpful only if it adopts participatory approach. Though challenging in nature to convince people to be own change makers, a rational thinking towards such application is required for. Communication at every level of interaction between man and his surroundings can be applied for developing self, community and nation in turn.
Communication in developing communities is also being applied through strategic propositions. Infused in planning, communication in this case also act as catalyst in driving desirable change. Nevertheless, failures of plan show forcible execution without engaging communities for whom the change is planned for. In this case also, communities should be prioritized in making plan work. Strategic planning in case of functionaries be government or others disseminate its services in terms of development schemes which engage plans to reach out and deliver facilities to people concerned but resulting in imparting limited impact in terms of persuasion or bringing dynamic change over time. These limit the development possibilities as these don’t engage beneficiaries in knowing their requirements.

Considering India, government schemes of ICDS in facilitating mother and child health, ASHA in facilitating basic health services, NBA on sanitation, education for all, basic facilities, pension schemes et al do not reflect significant change in the lives of rural India putting multidimensional differences in accessing such given services. Besides gap in information access, such inability in accessing services comes from lack of interaction with functionaries and responsiveness towards interventions. Lack of circulation of development messages between and among community members is another cause of it. Tendency of members in bagging facilities first by convincing power practitioners restricts messages in getting across too. Functionaries even knowing these facts fail to reach out one and all due to their own lack of interest along with non-participation of people in telling their stories to come over problems.

This also raises the question on need of developing any external intervention plan loaded with more instrumental than human centric strategies at all or to empower people utilizing their own knowledge system for their development that can be sustained. Instead of bringing aids for helping the needy, stress should be in strengthening communities more. Thus participatory approaches in its varied
forms can be undertaken in implementing development schemes. Such approach helps both the facilitators and stakeholders understand each other and bring out desired result.

Besides, “A highlight of participatory communication is that it facilitates reflection and learning among local groups, providing opportunities for dialogue, learning and critique, which again becomes central elements of evaluating a project or program” (Tufte & Mefalopulos 2009) xcvi. This also helps in re-planning of strategies in reaching the goal. Impact of any intervention should be resultant otherwise these have potentials to make people indifferent towards any external approach. Thus participation should be part of approaches from very beginning of plan execution to maximize outcomes. Natural and technology mediated communication can be applied again having quality of making people participants in accessing and utilizing messages for good.

Communication can also be equated as development in case of media usage in terms of accessibility. Such technological media (TV, mobile, internet et al) helps in persuading behavior change of target people through advocacy. Usage of these can help in getting messages in terms of information and knowledge across over a wider range but effects of it vary depending upon acceptance of such messages by the communities. Application of these messages is also questionable in terms of ability in implementing such knowledge. Though information can be useful in enhancing capacities of people if shared and utilized at community level.

Development efforts can infuse media in its planning to reach, convince and make people utilize messages disseminated through. Such technological means can also empower people through purposive utilization of these resources available to them. Nevertheless, community should be participant once again to mobilize change through media. Instead of single user, community altogether can
also access media purposively facilitating improvement through application of facts. However, linear approach of mediated messages tend to fail for not considering perspectives of different communities. Such inability can limit usage of technological media though mobile phone now used as key tool in sharing information between people resulting in larger distribution of messages among can result in utilization of such information at several level.

Communication utilization for-in-as development can be utilized unconditionally in different pattern suitable for the situation. It is the only possible way in knowing people and their praxis, strengths and backlogs and making platform of commonality for human action in several layers. Communication equally enables external development efforts to take place. Nevertheless, in determining possibilities of improvement knowing the right communication approach at the right moment is the need of the time. To note, “All future plans need to make it a point that the internal strength of all societies should work for their progress. Otherwise development would remain a menace that spoils the humanity” (LohoChoudhury 2011).

The present research study is done in three different villages forming a cluster (these have same government and panchayat offices and service centres to serve village communities) at their respective different stages of development to see their communication resources, social resources, interlink and utilization of those for their development. This approach of studying a cluster where different units have different levels of development was utilized in AURCP first. This approach is helpful in understanding community differences in responding to same or almost same socio-economic situation and stimulus from outside for development. Natural ability to acknowledge problems and resolving those through different levels of participation is to be understood. To know the praxis of villages in every respect, be it social, economic or religious and ways of
interactions among themselves that can lead towards future development interventions in strengthening communities.

2.4.1 Assam University Rural Communication Project (AURCP):-

Assam University Rural Communication Project (AURCP) from 1998 to 2001 Action Phase, established the idea of sustainable growth over generations by identifying the communities’ resources and transforming their lives with that help. The communities were found to have become choosers and decision makers of their development issue (including problems and scopes) which eventually helped the communities emerge stronger. Strategic planning to reach and communicate with the communities as their fellow brethren was there from outside to identify possibility of an approach of such development intervention. Gradually outsiders withdrew their participation. However, the communities remained fully engaged in their development that was drawn from within.

Combining both ‘Indian communication’ and ‘developing communities from within’ approach in application, AURCP was executed in three villages of Dakbunglow, Barjalenga Grant and Nayabil of Assam State at their different stages of development. The project aimed at empowering communities of these villages besides addressing gaps due to failure of institutional efforts by finding alternative development approach. The project thus had six principles to work upon:

1. ‘Developing Communities from Within’ based on concepts of Rabindranath Tagore, Mahatma Gandhi and Thakur Anukulchandra
2. Higher utilization of local resources in development initiatives
3. Higher level utilization of grass root communication (formats, events, talents and content)
4. Integrating indigenous and new knowledge in initiatives
5. Least funding from outside
6. Sadharanikaran perspective of communication was the guiding light in all communication

The project also engaged youth clubs, farmers’ groups, ICDS workers, local NGOs, Krishi Vigyan Kendro (agriculture science centre) of Jorhat Agricultural University along with the villagers in implementing the project in all three villages. In this a new method of communication known as Information Gap Elimination Meet Series (IGEMS) was adopted to identify and prioritize communities’ problems and strengths and execution of allied development plans. Each step of this process engaged village communities with their resources. This helped “people realize that they can transform hitherto latent facts from within the community into potent force for action” (LochoChoudhury 2011). Such meet series helped in overcoming information gaps among members facilitating common understanding.

The project heavily explored natural and social resources of communities and potential usage of such in making them developed from within. Identification and purposive utilization of Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS) of communities in their several practices of socio-economic, cultural and religious forms also helped in understanding and empowering these communities at large. Utilization of IKS was found scientific in nature in several respects from knowledge in farming to seasonal occasions determining nutrient value of foods consumed. It made the project successful in determining communities’ ability in sustaining its growth. This also confirmed least dependence on external factors for development. Villagers were active participant in identifying problems and solving themselves.

AURCP established success of Indian communication concept by bringing villagers at same level of co-operation at its respective stage of development. It
certainly has developed the communities from within that has sustained over time as found in evaluation reports even after withdrawal of action phase from these villages. With a long term sustainable development goal, the project has succeeded in achieving so. It also established a new group communication method that is effective in plan execution, trouble shooting and modification of re-intervention if required. Instead of intervention in its restricted sense, communities can be made responsible for own improvement as well. The aim of the project was to ensure community growth from within which was achieved. Keeping the Indian perspective in mind, the work is significant as it has proposed alternative development approach making a shift from only economic growth to trans-generational empowering communities in effective ways that can be sustained and reformed by themselves identifying demand of time.

That the Sadharanikarana concept of simplifying communication process through common understanding of communicators known as Swahridayta may result in “effective communication that shall ultimately culminate in Vikas (Development)” (Bhattacharyya 2013)\textsuperscript{cii} can be shown as\textsuperscript{ciii}:

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\begin{array}{cccc}
\text{Vijnana} & \text{Sadharanikarana} & \text{Swahridayta} & \text{Vikas} \\
\text{(Science)} & \text{(Communication)} & \text{(Commonness)} & \text{(Development)}
\end{array}
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Thus, the success of AURCP has taught us that “extra-ordinary people devise many events and process-based techniques with which they are comfortable, showing many of our traditional practices. For that though, they have to first analyse the thought process of the ordinary masses, orient their mind and heart accordingly in sync with the mind and heart of the ordinary people and thereafter formulate the strategies” (Bhattacharyya 2013)\textsuperscript{civ}. 
AURCP did action research straightway identifying villagers’ problems and strengths in three villages at different stages of development. In the present research, the researcher has tried to see communication relation with development in three different villages at different stages of development. The present study aims at defining reason of development variations and role of communication as interface with such variations. This study equally maps down natural and social resources of communities to understand contribution of such resource to the present condition and possibilities in future. The perspective mainly being ESTGP in finding set praxis of villagers through participatory modes. This allows in determining future intervention in developing communities from within. Based on the same motto of finding and utilizing community resources, the present study has utilized AURCP FIS tool in its field testing. However, finding differences with respect to geographical locations and exposures of people in present study, few new questions have been included to evaluate status further.