INTRODUCTION

Decentralization has acquired a major focus all over the world and has drawn scholarly attention not only in third world countries, but also caught the imagination of the developed world. Scholars and statesmen alike have emphasized on decentralization and people centric development through participatory approach.

Democratic Decentralization is being considered as an instrument for the upliftment of socio-economic condition of the rural masses. “Assertion in favour of decentralization are often founded upon a wider critique of central state planning, which holds that large and centrally administered bureaucracies represents inefficient means of allocating resources (and generating wealth) within society (economist, 2001; Lal, 2000; World Bank,2000)”\(^1\). “Underlying the case of democratic decentralization as an assertion in the fact that a more decentralized state apparatus will be more exposed and therefore, more responsive to local needs and aspirations” (Crook and Sverrisson, 2001)”\(^2\). This, it is argued, will produce a system of governance that is more effective and accountable to local people. Decentralization, with its exclusive meaning, neither be a singular answers for establishment of a grass-roots democracy nor be an instrument for rural development. Side by side popular participation and empowerment at grass-roots level is equally required.


\(^2\) Ibid.
Democratic decentralization and community empowerment has been an important concern and objective of India right from the time of independence. India being basically a nation with about 70 to 80 percent of rural population, it is imperative to attach priority to rural development. Hence, while attempting to bring about change in socio-economic condition of the weaker sections, the Government of India has made several efforts in the economic planning, formulation and implementation of multiple policy prescriptions. Introduction of Community Development in 1952 in certain states happened to be a concerted effort in this direction. It introduced Community Development Programmes on a wider scale, encompassing almost all activities of rural development. However, concern for rural development did not show desired results. Traditional state of affairs led to some rethinking on overall strategy of development in general and initiative for rural development in particular. It was due to the basic understanding during the initial years that the benefit will 'trickle down' on a gradual process for the improvement of the conditions of the rural masses. Subsequently, it was realized that reduction of poverty could not be left to the 'trickle down' effect alone. Hence, from the sixth plan onwards several massive rural development programmes like IRDP, NREP, etc. were launched.

The experiences with these centrally sponsored programmes at different parts of the country have been varied in nature. However, the impacts of all these programmes have been quite disappointing. It did not yield expected outcome. As a result, there has been a paradigm shift. The erstwhile emphasis on top-down approach got replaced by bottom-up emphasis. By 1980's, it was realized that, it would be difficult to achieve broad base rural development without adequate involvement of the people at the
grass-roots level in formulating and implementing various programmes for their economic upliftment. It got translated into policy intervention for creation of ample space for the local to have a share not only in policy formulation but also in implementation of the same. In a bid to empower the people at the grass-roots level the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act was introduced in 1992. This Amendment aimed at giving an institutional trust for democratic decentralization of planning and implementation at the grass-roots level.

**Conceptual Aspects**

The conceptual framework of the study is concerned, on the concept of Decentralization, Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Institutions which are concerned with grass-roots level involvement and participation. It is because of the fact that the entire system of grass-roots development needs decentralization of power, finance, resources and full participation of the local people in the developmental programmes to achieve the ultimate end.

**Decentralisation:**

The academic and policy oriented studies on decentralization are not new in themselves. Efforts at reducing the power and authority of the central government in favour of decentralization of political and administrative structure have been a part of the nation-building process.

The concept ‘decentralization’ is a multi-faceted one and encompasses a wide variety of institutional arrangement. Decentralization as used in English, derived from the Latin word,
meaning “away from the centre”\textsuperscript{3}. The word is used under many different constitutional systems and in different social environments. “The terminological problem is varied from use of abbreviated symbols to choice of “decentralization”, (Mass, 1959).\textsuperscript{4}

To an economist decentralization means dispersal of industries. To a local government expert, it implies devolution of power, function and responsibility to small territorial units. To an administrator at the centre, it means discretion of field or regional officer or delegation of responsibility within the same hierarchy. To a managing director or business organization, it denotes the necessity of starting some new administrative branches in certain areas. The World Bank defines decentralization as the “transfer of authority and responsibility for public functions from central government to sub-ordinate or quasi-independent government organizations or the private sector”\textsuperscript{5}. While Steffensen, Tidedemand, Naitore, Ssewankambo and Mwaipopo (2004), define it as the devolution of power and competence to independent governments below central government level. These government are given responsibilities (typical within certain levels and ceilings) for determining the level and quality of services to be provided, the manner in which those services will be provided and sources and size of funds to finance the delivery of those services\textsuperscript{6}. According to the Decentralization Enabling Act, 2000, decentralization is being looked at as “delegation and devolution of functions, resources and authority from central government to Regional Council and Local Authorities within the frame work of a unitary state”\textsuperscript{7}. According to Cf. Leonard D. White, Decentralization as, “that

\textsuperscript{3} W. Macmillan, \textit{Delegation and Authority}, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1961, p.5.


\textsuperscript{5} http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/765255/decentralization.


\textsuperscript{7} \textit{Report of the Directorate of Decentralization Coordination}, op.cit.
process which denotes the transfer of authority, legislative, judicial or administrative, from a higher level of government to lower".

Decentralization is interpreted as a means to make the State more responsive and adaptable to the local needs rather than concentration of administrative powers and responsibility at the centre. More specifically, decentralization is referred to as a process of sharing of powers by the central ruling groups with other groups, each having authority within a specific area or the state. From the point of view of norms, it means presence of formal political structures for each defined area representing a combination of local as well as central interests, who exercises the power of decision-making at the local levels. But such allocation of powers is protected by formal as well as normative rules accepted by the centre. The process of decentralization involves both administration and the government as it denotes delegation of powers to the lower levels in the territorial hierarchy; this could be within the state or in the offices within the large scale organization.

Decentralization is an important aspect of state’s functioning and is not confined to the territorial hierarchy alone. From the practical point of view, hierarchical prescriptions of functions powers would not be able to give satisfactory results if these levels are not equipped with powers of taking decisions and

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implementing them. Because, decision-making is important for determining the forms and extent of decentralization.

Decentralization, as further argued, enhances democratic stability. The decentralization of state authority and devolution of power to the local and regional units appears to be an important condition for the development, consolidation and improvement of democracy. It is also true that due to proximity of local governing institutions, and their easy accessibility, the locals are at ease to know the way of functioning of the said institutions and the defects therein. A truly federal polity must, therefore, not debate whether there is need for decentralization or not, because, it is supposed to be one of its basic characteristics. However, it is often being confused by many with other apparently similar concepts. Conceptually, an important distinction is made between:

- "Deconcentration, in which the local bodies are instructed to assume responsibilities that have traditionally been carried out by central line agencies; and

- Delegation on the other hand, refers to the transfer of power and responsibility for specifically defined functions to organizations that are outside regular bureaucratic structures and are indirectly controlled by the central government. Ultimate responsibility remains with the sovereign authority. This type of decentralization is usually applied on the grounds that central bureaucracies tend to be inefficient.

- Devolution means which local bodies are granted the political and financial authority by the central government to undertake their duties (Blair, 2000; Crook and Monor, 1998: 6-7; Rondinelli et.al., 1989). Under devolution, local units of the government make autonomous and independent decisions and
their legal status makes them separate or distinct from the central government. Central government retain only residual or supervisory control over local government units and policies. Of course, democratic decentralization implies more than the downward delegation of the authority. Crucially, it entails a system of governance in which citizen possess the right to hold local public officials to account through the use of elections, collective action and other democratic means that captures the essence of this important idea”12.

The term ‘decentralization’ in this study means, transferring of both responsibilities and resources to the local authority in order to enhance people’s participation, citizen orientation, responsiveness, service delivery, improve financial management, accountability and so on. It has been recognized that decentralization is only a means; the ends is people oriented planning. Decentralization is only a starting point to this end in the hope that the effective organization of the people will bring them in the planning process; that can be more successful at the lower level. There is a feared based on the past experience that at the lower level the vested interest were more powerful. This apprehension must be proving false if decentralization is to hold the field.

Hence, it has been argued that decentralization does not merely imply that planning decisions are taken at district or Block levels. Surely, if a Block plan is worked out by BDO’s and is no longer accountable to the people; it does not constitute

decentralized planning. Side by side, popular participation and empowerment at grass-roots level is equally required. Popular participation simply means involvement of people in project formulation, evaluation and implementation that concerns or affects them. In this context people should not be treated as passive respondent or consumers but as a project developers, evaluators and operators. Thus, for effective decentralization there requires decentralized arrangement at various levels so people could easily participate in the planning process. However, it is an accepted fact that unless the teeming millions of people are not ready to participate in benefits sharing by themselves, any amount of decentralized planning will fail to deliver well. It is also advocated by the planners and experts that there should be more participative arrangement at the lower levels for the successful implementation of decentralized planning. It is due to this fact which lured us to adopt the concept of decentralization and popular participation.

Rural Development:

The ‘Development’ is essentially a dynamic process which transforms an economy and society from a relatively backward state to a more advanced state. “The transition encompasses several dimensions such as growth in productivity and income, structural change in the economy and the society, institutional changes, changes in attitudes and values of people and even in customs and social practices”\textsuperscript{13}. Thus, rural development has acquired a central role in theory and practice of development right

\textsuperscript{13} Bezbarua,M.P., & Sarma Suranjan, "Towards a Strategy for Rural Development",in M.C Behera's (eds),"Globalization and Development Dilemma",reflection from North-East India), 2004, Mittal Publications, New Delhi, p. 44.
from 1950’s, when it began with a stress on the community
development approach.

Rural development is not a recent origin but has
been a dominant thesis even when “capital input-output ratio
and Harlod-Domar models of growth were being talked about”\(^\text{14}\). However, the focus on rural development in the present time, that
emphasis on sustainable economic and human development in
general, arisen from two lines of reasoning as given by M.P.
Bezbaruah & Suranjan Sarma. The first and the more obvious
one, especially for a country like India arises from the fact that a
large majority of the population i.e. 70 to 80 per cent for most
states in India, live in rural areas among which incidence and
intensity of poverty is relatively higher. Besides, the general
deficiency of basic facilities such as roads, communication,
power, education, health care and even sanitation and drinking
water, not only contributes to and compounds low productivity
and intensity of employment but also has a general depressing
effect in the quality of life. Obviously, special attention is required
to address the problem of development of rural areas and the
people living there.

Another line of reasoning, which calls for special focus on
rural development, arises from the disparities in the distribution
of opportunities between urban and rural areas. With
concentration of industrial, commercial, financial and
administrative set ups in the urban centres, the modernizing
socio-economic prospect and the opportunities are usually
disproportionately concentrated in towns and cities. Thus,
developing urban oriented islands of growth without concomitant

\(^{14}\) Rao, V.M., "Evolution of Rural Development Programmes in India", in M.C
Behra’s (eds), 2004, *ibid*, p.61.
improvement opportunities in rural areas has lauded up many developing countries in dualistic structure which are not conducive for sustainable and over all progress of the economy and the society. Time has therefore, come for greater attentions, efforts for expediting rural development so that not only the quality of the life of the people of villages improves but the metropolitan centres of industry, commerce and administration also takes strides towards prosperity with less congestion and better socio-economic and physical environment. Thus, rural development as an integrated concept of growth and poverty elimination has been of paramount concern in all the consequent five year plans. Rural development programmes comprise of following:

• provision of basic infrastructure facilities in the rural areas e.g., schools, health facilities, roads drinking water, electrification etc;
• improving agricultural productivity in the rural areas;
• provisions of social services like health and education for socio-economic development;
• implementing scheme for the promotion of rural industry, increasing agriculture productivity, providing rural employment etc;
• assistance to individual families and their Self-Help Group (SHG) living below poverty line by providing productive resources through credit and subsidy. Nevertheless, since 70s the concept of rural development has undergone a change and has become more comprehensive.

The concept of rural development is a complex phenomenon, as a strategy and discipline. The term is of focal interest and

widely acclaimed in both developed and developing countries. There is however, no universal acceptable definition and the term is used in different ways and in vastly divergent contexts. As a concept it connotes overall development of rural areas with a view to improve the quality of life of rural people. In this sense, it is a comprehensive and multidimensional concept and encompasses the development of agriculture, allied activities – village and cottage industries and crafts, socio-economic infrastructure, community services and facilities, and above all, human resources in rural areas. As a phenomenon, it is the result of interactions between various physical, technological, economic, socio-cultural and institutional factors. As a strategy, it is designed to improve the economic and social-well being of a specific group of people - the rural poor. As a discipline, it is multidisciplinary in nature representing an intersection of agricultural, social, behavioural, engineering and management science.

According to World Bank, “rural development is a ‘strategy’ designed to improve the economic and social life of a specific group of people - the rural poor (IBRD, 1975)”

Rural development also implies both the economic betterment of the people as well as of greater social transformation. It encompasses a spectrum of activities and human mobilization to make people stand on their own feet and break away from all structural disabilities which chain them to condition in which they may live in.

In the words of Robert Chambers, “Rural development is a strategy to enable a specific group of people, poor rural men and women, to gain for themselves and their children more of what

they want and need. It involves helping the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in the rural areas to demand and control more of the benefits of rural development. The group includes small scale farmers, tenants and the landless.\(^{18}\)

Copp has defined rural development as a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the well being and self-realization of rural people. One of the objectives of rural development is to "widen people's ranges of choices". The efforts should be towards preservation and improvement of the rural environment and rural development planning which may help in identifying the complex factors that contribute the development of a rural area.\(^{19}\)

Further, rural development is closely related to the approach of sustainable development. In other words, development in rural sector needs to be so designed that development becomes self-propelling and environmentally self-sustain.

Hence, by keeping all the above theoretical concepts into account, it can be concluded that the rural development is a process which aims to raise the capacity of the people so that they could control their environment within the distribution of benefits. Further, the basic objective of rural development is to improve the living condition of the rural masses that are living below poverty line and the development of the rural area as a whole. Hence, of late, the rural development is viewed as a strategy to bring about improvement in the economic and social


life of the rural poor. It implies both the economic betterment of the people as well as greater social transformation. Thus, Panchayati Raj Institutions has been instituted in the state as an agent of rural development. However, the implementation aspect of various programmes has been far from satisfactory. This is reflected through people's perception of the institutions, government's concern about various programmes and personal experience through field study. The present study is an attempt to measure the effectiveness of the rural development programmes initiated by Panchayati Raj Institutions and whether the benefits of these programmes are reaching the target groups. Besides, it is also an attempts to study as to why the Panchayati Raj Institutions failed in achieving their goals and to suggest what extent they can overcome their problems of dissatisfaction within the new constitutional framework.

Panchayati Raj

The philosophy of Panchayati Raj is deeply steeped in tradition and culture of rural India. As a system of self-governance, it has evolved as early as human civilization. Many references are found in the epics of kautilya's *Arthasastra*, *Manusmriti*, *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* and in the literature of Buddhist and Jains\(^{21}\). History also reveals that during the time of Rig-Veda (1200B.C.) there exist self-governing village bodies called *Sabhas*. With the passage of time, these bodies became Panchayats (Council of five persons). Panchayats were functional institutions of grass-roots governance in almost every village. The village Panchayat or elected Council had large powers, both executive and judicial. Land was distributed by this Panchayat


which also collected taxes out of the produce and paid the government share on behalf of the village. However, above these village councils there exist large Panchayat or Council to supervise and interfere in their works if and when necessary. Further under Mughal rule, the casteism and feudalistic system of governance in medieval period slowly eroded the self-governance in villages. A new class of feudal chiefs and revenue collectors (Zaminders) emerged between the ruler and the people. And so, began the stagnation and declination of self-government in village. Similarly, during the British rule, the autonomy of Panchayats gradually declined with the establishment of local, civil and criminal courts, revenue and policy organizations, the increase in communications, the growth of individualism and the operation of the individual Ryotwari (Landholder-wise) system as against Mahalwari or village tenure system. Even after the appointment of various committees such as Royal Commission on Decentralisation (1907), the Government of India Resolution (1918), the Report of Montague Chelmsford on constitutional reform (1919) etc. a hierarchal control evolved. The administrator became the focal point of rural governance. The British were not concerned with decentralized democracy but were aiming for colonial objectives. However, after four decades since the adoption of the constitution, Panchayati Raj institutions have evolved as a new form move from the non-justiciable part through a separate amendment known as 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act 1992. As a result whole new status has added to their history. Thus, Panchayati Raj as an old institution is meant for rural poor through which they could take active participation in

the decision-making process and in any developmental activities that are taking place in rural areas.

The term ‘Panchayati Raj’ literally means an assembly (*Yat*) of five wise and respected elders (*Panch*) chosen and accepted by the village community. ‘RAJ’ literally means governance or government. Mahatma Gandhi advocated Panchayati Raj, a decentralized form of government where each village is responsible for its own affairs, as the foundation of India’s political system. His term for such a vision was “Gram Swaraj” (Village self-governance). Traditionally these assemblies settled disputes between individuals and villages.

The basic concept of Panchayati Raj is that the villagers should think, decide and act for their own socio-economic interests. The Panchayati Raj is related to village self-governance, where the people, in the form of an organization will think, decide and act for their collective interest. Self-governance allows the villagers to decide about themselves without hampering other interest. Collective interest signifies the interest of individual one side and societal and national interest on the other. They are complementary to each other in the sense, when Panchayats end their activities the state government takes them up.

The term ‘Panchayati Raj’ in its present form, is relatively new, having originated during the British administration i.e., British rule in Indian subcontinent between 1858 and 1947. It also refers to the period of dominion of the region under the British rule. The ‘region’ commonly called India in contemporary usage, included areas directly administered by the United

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26 http://nird.ap.nic.in/clip/pi.html.
Kingdom, as well as princely states ruled by individual ruler under the paramount of British crown. After 1876, the resulting political union was officially called the Indian Empire and issued passports under that name. It was adopted by state Government during 1950s and 60s as laws were passed to establish Panchayats in various states. It also found backing in the Indian Constitution with the 73rd Amendment Act in 1992 to accommodate the idea. The Amendment Act of 1992 contains provision for devolution of powers and responsibilities to the Panchayats both for preparation of plans for economic development and social justice and for implementation in relation to Twenty-Nine Subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution\textsuperscript{27}. Thus, in quest of development in rural areas, it was felt that the objectives of rural development could achieve only through decentralization of power to the Panchayati Raj Institutions.

Hence, by keeping pace with the national idea of democratic decentralization and community empowerment, Arunachal Pradesh also implemented the Panchayati Raj system. Though a late starter, so far as democratic participatory political process is concern, it also introduced the institution of Panchayati Raj as early as in 1969, under the NEFA Panchayati Raj Regulation 1967 and Panchayat bodies were constituted for the first time in 1969\textsuperscript{28}. Arunachal Pradesh has conducted the elections to the Panchayati Raj institutions on 2\textsuperscript{nd} April 2003 as per the 73rd Constitutional Amendment under the Arunachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act 1997. Though, it has fulfilled the

\textsuperscript{27} http://en. Wikipedia, org/wiki/History of Panchayati Raj in India # Early History.

constitutional requirement of institutional arrangement for decentralization, actual devolution of the power to the Panchayat bodies is still awaited. While devolution of power is a pre-requisite condition for rural development, there is the need for transfer of power to the people at the village level. Arunachal Pradesh predominantly being a tribal state, inhabited by more than 25 major tribes and several dozens of minor groups suffer from socio-economic backwardness, is yet to reap the benefit of power to the people.

**The problem**

Unlike in other part of the country, the area of performance of Panchayati Raj institution in Arunachal Pradesh has not been sufficiently explored. The few works available are mainly concentrated on structural aspect without sufficient focus on the relevance of the institutions. It is also evident from the fact that no analytical study has been conducted to understand the role and relevance of these institutions towards rural development. Since, the role of Panchayati Raj institutions in decentralized planning has attained paramount importance; it is natural to have indepth study as to whether this arrangement for grass-roots development has achieved the goals of rural development.

Hence, in this study an attempt is being made to inquire into the actual functioning of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in Arunachal Pradesh. It also aims at finding out the role that is being played by these institutions in the process of the rural development with the initiative of the state government. The study also tries to understand the perception of the office bearers of these institutions and their understanding of the responsibility as planner and executors. Besides, an attempt is also made to
measure the extent of public participation and cooperation with Panchayat bodies and their perception of the institution.

**Review of literature**

Since late 1950's and with the advent of planning era, there arouse number of literature pertaining to the institutions of Panchayati Raj covering various aspects such as political, administrative, financial, and functional. However, in present context of Arunachal Pradesh, the literature available is scanty and empirical studies are negligible. As there are overwhelming developments taking place in the area of rural development, it is essential to know how far these institutions have been evolved themselves in fulfilling their objective of rural development. These developments are motivating the researcher to explore the actual extent and involvement of these institutions in solving the problems of rural people by implementing the developmental programmes meant for them. There are number of studies, which have mainly concentrated on the structural patterns of these institutions and paid less importance on functional aspects of these institutions in the process of decentralized planning. Those are mostly descriptive in nature and less empirical in their analysis.

S.R. Maheswari, in his significant study on, *Local Government in India*, Lakshmi Narain Publishers, Agra, 1970, discussed the historical evolution of Panchayati Raj in India. The author also discussed both rural and urban arms of local government in India. Finally, the author suggests ways and means for improving the system of local government in India.

government where rise of all is possible without any discrepancy to any segment as India is a diversified country.

M.P. Bezbaruah and Suranjan Sarma, *Towards a Strategy for Rural Development*, P.K. Panigrahi, *Democratic Decentralised Governance, Empowerment and Rural Development*, in M.C. Behera’s (ed.), *Globalisation and Development Dilemma (Reflection from North-East India)*, 2004, Mittal Publications, New Delhi and D. Rajasekhar, *Institutions of Development*, V.Bijukumar, *Decentralised Planning and Rural Development: Theoretical Issues and Experiment*, in M.C.Behara’s(ed.), *Globalisation and Rural Development*, 2005, Commonwealth Publications, New Delhi are some of the indepth study done on the aspects of rural development and its implications on the rural masses. These authors stated that rural development is a dynamic process that transforms the economy and society from relatively backward state to more advance state. Further they found that issues of democratic decentralization and rural development raise a number of questions about the ways in which, state intervene in rural society, and how this affects the economic opportunity. They argued that devolution of power is not the answer for grass-roots democracy alone. Side by side, popular participation and empowerment at the local level is equally important.

Panchayati Raj Institutions in India. Besides, these authors highlighted some conceptual aspects of rural development and stated that rural development is closely related to the approach of sustainable development. Further, they stated that the objectives of rural development could be a success only through the people's participation in any developmental programmes that are taking place in the concern areas.

Nikunjalata Dutta, *Village Panchayat in India*, A Case Study of Assam, mittal Publications, New Delhi, 1989, discussed rural development and people's participation in the electoral process of Panchayati Raj in the state. He concluded that rural development can be successful only when there is a popular participation, not only in the election rather, all aspects of rural development programmes initiated by the Panchayat bodies.

Verrier Elwin, *Democracy in NEFA*, Shillong, 1965, gives a descriptive account of almost all the tribal councils of Arunachal Pradesh and brings out their common features. Though the panchayati Raj was not introduced at that time, he discussed the likely impact it might have with the development of rural areas. However, the author never, discussed the role of Panchayati Raj institution in the process of policy formulation and implementation in respect of rural development.

Bijon Mohanta, *Administrative Development of Arunachal Pradesh*, Uppal Publications, New Delhi, 1984, is an attempt to trace out the administrative development of the territory (Arunachal Pradesh) stretching from 1875-1975. But the author's work, in spite of its uniqueness did not incorporate the present scenario of socio-economic development and the problem faced by the tribal people.
A.C. Talukdar, *Political Transition in the Grass-root in Tribal India*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1987, a pioneering work, devoted on the system and impact of modern democratic institutions in tribal society that has remained isolated from the influence of modern political culture for long. It makes an attempt to analyze the process of political transition and modernization at the grass-roots level through the functioning of the panchayat bodies. However, the author’s work has given emphasis on the influence of panchayati raj on the traditional village council (*kebang*) of Adi tribe and gave less importance on the role and working of Panchayati Raj in the state.

Sanjay Dubey, *Dynamics of Tribal Local Polity and Panchayati Raj in Arunachal Pradesh*, Premier Publishing House, New Delhi, is an attempt to study the impact of Panchayati Raj institutions on the tribal societies of Arunachal Pradesh and the socio-political changes of various types of traditional village councils of different tribes. However, the author’s work is descriptive and general in nature and no attempt has been made to draw the process either of decentralized planning or on the functional dimension of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in rural development. Further, there are some deep-rooted reasons behind the low participation of people in Gram Sabha meetings which the author has not highlighted.

Dwarikanath Pandey, *Local Government in Arunachal Pradesh*, Himalayan Publishers, New Delhi, 1997, examines the historical evolution of local self-government in Arunachal Pradesh and its structure. He also made an attempt to examine the varied forms of tribal administration along with democratic institutions that prevailed since 1967. However, he did not discuss the role
and function of Panchayati Raj institutions in the process of rural development. Besides, the author’s work is informative in nature and lacks analytical rigour.

Pura, Tado, Political Transition Among the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh: A case of Apatani, Ph. D Thesis, Arunachal University, Itanagar, 2001, made indepth study on the impact of Panchayat Raj institution on the traditional village councils, especially village council (Buliang) of Apatani. Attempt has also been made to measure the people’s attitude towards Panchayati Raj. However, the author’s work is mainly concentrated on the Buliang of Apatani’s and gives less importance on the role and function of the Panchayati Raj Institutions in respect of rural development.

Rajir, Karlo, Emerging Pattern of Tribal Leadership in Arunachal Pradesh, Commonwealth Publishers, New Delhi, 2005, comprehended the changing pattern of rural leadership in terms of its determinants, attitudes and perceptions, decision-making process and the role of primordial loyalties in the leadership process. The author concluded that, with the advent of forces of modernization and rapid political socialization, there is rapid transformation in leadership pattern vis-à-vis traditional polity.

Objectives

Based on the broader framework of the statement of the problem the mains objectives of the present study are as follows;

(a) to examine the socio-economic background of the Panchayati Raj representatives;
(b) to examine the role of Panchayati Raj Institutions as instrument of rural development;
(c) to understand the manner in which the plans at the Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parishad level are prepared and consolidated;
(d) to evaluate the physical achievement with regard to agriculture, minor irrigation, fisheries, animal husbandry, communication, education, health and welfare and other relevant aspects;
(e) to measure the extent of public participation and cooperation with Panchayat bodies and their perception of the institution;
(f) finally, to suggest ways and means, as how Panchayati Raj Institutions can play effective role in decentralized planning based on the data and information available from the field.

**Research Questions**

The main objectives of present study revolve around the issue on decentralized planning, perception of the leaders and people's participation. Accordingly, an attempt is made to investigate and find answer to the following questions:

(a) How the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions has brought socio-economic changes in rural areas?
(b) What are the various measures taken by the Panchayat bodies for the development of the rural areas?
(c) What are the perception and awareness of the Panchayat bodies, villagers and local intellectuals about the Institutions?
(d) What are the people's attitudes towards the development of rural areas initiated by the Panchayati Raj Institutions?
(e) What is the extent of people's participation in the process of decentralized planning?
Methodology

The present study is historico-analytical method and based on primary sources of data and whenever necessary, secondary sources of data have also been used to supplement the former. Data for the study were collected from field study, conducted survey in Panchayat areas of four Community Development Blocks viz. Aalo-East, Aalo-West, Basar and Liromoba. Data were also collected from official acts, reports and records as well as records of Panchayat office. Both published and unpublished works were also used as secondary sources of data wherever available. Information was also collected from the Panchayat leaders, local intellectuals and knowledgeable persons through interview, formal and informal discussions.

The universe of study constitutes Panchayati Raj Institutions of the West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, covering an area of 8,325 sq. km. having population of 103918 distributed in 379 villages. The study was carried out by visiting Panchayat offices viz. state, District and Gram Panchayat level. Panchayat leaders of four Blocks as well as local intellectual and knowledgeable persons were also interviewed. Thus a combination of documentary and interview method has been adopted for better understanding of the problem. The size of the sample for this study was 337 respondents, drawn from 10 Gram Panchayat Members (GPM), 10 Anchal Samiti Members (ASM) from each Panchayat Block and all the nine Zila Parishad Members (ZPM) of the said Blocks and 10 office bearers from each Block. About 104 local intellectuals and 104 villagers selected through random sampling have been interviewed to understand the popular

29 West Siang District at a Glance, The Economics and Statistics Department, Aalo, 2004, pp. 2-12
perception of the Panchayati Raj Institutions and Rural Development. For indepth understanding of the problem, more respondents could have been interviewed, however, due to unavailability of the respondents during our field study and moreover due to unawareness of the people about the different schemes and programmes of the rural development initiated by the Panchayati Raj Institutions, they refused to response our query.

For the purpose of this study, a Panchayat leader means elected members of Gram Panchayat, Anchal Samiti and Zila Parishad. Local intellectual means college or university teachers, civil servants of All India Services (IAS) and Arunachal Pradesh Civil Service Cadre (APCSC), while knowledgeable persons mean all officials working in government offices located in West Siang district.

Person- to- person interview were conducted by the researcher by using a structured questionnaire-cum-interview schedule. Extensive field notes of the discussions with local intellectual and knowledgeable persons were also used by the researcher.

The questionnaire-cum-interview schedule has been designed in English for the sake of convenient but was translated into local language wherever needed. The data collected through questionnaire-cum-interview schedule have been tabulated in a coding sheet to have a clear view of the replies of the respondents and figure of calculation for the purpose of analysis. Those data were supplemented by the field notes maintained by the researcher.
Organization of the study
The study is organized into seven chapters including introduction and conclusions.

Chapter I: Introduction
This chapter consists of two parts. The first part focused on the conceptual aspects and the research design while the second part provides an introduction to the socio-economic and geographical profile of West Siang District as the setting of the study.

Chapter II: Historical Perspective of Panchayati Raj
This chapter emphasizes the evolutionary aspects of Panchayati Raj Institutions in India and in Arunachal Pradesh.

Chapter III: Socio-Economic Background
This chapter provides an account of the socio-economic background of the Panchayat leaders.

Chapter IV: Working of Panchayati Raj
This chapter highlights the various developmental works taken up by the Panchayati Raj Institution in the study area and its impact on socio-economic life of people of the study area.

Chapter V: Popular Perception and Performance Evaluation
This chapter focused on the perception of the leader as well as other respondents regarding the performance of Panchayati Raj Institutions in fulfilling the objectives of the institutions.

Chapter VI: People’s Participation
This chapter measures the extent of people’s participation and co-operation with the Panchayat bodies in the process of rural development undertaken by Panchayati Raj Institutions.
Chapter VII: Findings and Recommendations

Finding of field level happening and on their basis recommends ways and means for effective decentralized planning.

PROFILE OF STUDY AREA

West Siang District, like other districts of Arunachal Pradesh is a mountainous and rug topographical area located in the central part of Arunachal Pradesh. Its mainland is extended between 93°57'E longitude and 27°20'N latitude. The district is surrounded by the Tibetan region of the China in the North, East Siang District of Arunachal Pradesh in the East and Upper Subansiri and Lower Subansiri District in the West. The southern boundary adjoins Dhemaji district of Assam.30

The name of the district has been derived from the mighty river Siang, which is called Dihang in the plains of Assam and Tsangpo in Tibet. Prior to 1914, the district was part of Lakhimpur district of Assam. In the year 1914, the area which is presently occupied by the East Siang, West Siang and Upper Siang district was excluded from the administrative division called Central and Eastern section and North-East Tract. In the year 1919, the Central and Eastern section was redesigned as the Sadiya Frontier Tract, which further bifurcated into two separate administrative units called Abor Hills and Mishmi Hills Districts. In 1954, the Abor Hill District was redesigned as Siang Frontier Division, which was again renamed as the Siang district in the year 1965.31 On 1st June 1980, Siang district was divided into

two districts viz. East Siang and West Siang. Again, on 1\textsuperscript{st} April, 1989, Tuting sub-division was curved out of the West Siang district and added to East Siang district.\textsuperscript{32}

**Physiography**

Like most of the areas of Arunachal Pradesh, the region has diverse terrain extending over valleys of low altitude to high altitudes. Its northern part falls within higher mountain zone consisting of mass tangled narrow valleys. The foothill range lies in the southern part having hills of low latitudes. The district occupies an area of 8,325 sq. km.

The district has 6 (six) sub-divisions namely– Aalo (Along), Basar, Likhabali, Yomcha, Rumgong and Mechukha. It has 9 (nine) Blocks, viz. Aalo-East, Aalo-West, Gensi, Kaying, Rumgong, Liromoba, Basar, Mechukha and Monigong. As per 2001 census, there are 20 (twenty) circles and two towns in the district. The indigenous schedule tribes of the district are Galo, Minyong, Bori, Bokar, Pailibo, Ramo, Memba and Khamba. The important rivers of the district are Yomgo or Siyom, Yagyapong, Remi, Hirik, Hiru, Sike, Shite, Siji and Sigen. Among the rivers of West Siang district, Yomgo is the longest. It originates from the Monigong circle and flows through Tato, Payum, Kaying, Kamba and Aalo circles.\textsuperscript{33}

**Population**

The West Siang district has 397 villages with total tribal population of 10,3918 out of which 379 belongs to Schedule Caste which constitute 0.2 per cent and scheduled tribe


\textsuperscript{33} Statistical Handbook of West Siang District, Along 2002, p.2.
population accounts 78.47 per cent as per 2001 census enumeration. Out of the total tribal population, 54349 are male and 49,569 are females. Rural population living in the villages is 82806 out of which 42,389 are males and 40,417 are females. Urban population is 21,112 out of which 11,960 are male and 9,152 are females. The proportions of total rural population constitute 79.69 per cent and the urban population constitutes the rest 20.31 per cent. Out of the total population of the state, West Siang District accounts 9.49 per cent and rank 4th in the state. The density of population of the district is 13 persons per sq. km. The Aalo and Basar are declared as urban area with population of 36,229 and 19,205 respectively. The decadal growth rate of population of the district according to 2001 census has recorded as 15.17. The sex ratio of the district is 913 females per 1000 males, against 859 females per 1000 males of Arunachal Pradesh. The sex ratio of rural area is found to be 915 females per 1000 males and sex ratio for urban area of the district is 776 females per 1000 males\textsuperscript{34}. The tribal groups inhabiting the district are: (1) Galo, (2) Minyong (major groups), (3) Bori, (4) Bokar, (5) Pailibo, (6) Ramo, (7) Membas and (8) Khambas.

The Galo are largest in number in the district and their area starts from the Sido valley up to Subansiri River in the West. To their South is the Lakhimpur district of Assam. The Minyong area extends from Rumgong circle to Kaying circle in the left bank of Siyom River and Pailibo or Libo exclusively occupies an area of the district spread over Tato and Payum circles. The Bokar and Ramo are found in Mechuka Sub-division and Bori occupies the while area of central portion of the Siyom valley and

\textsuperscript{34} Sources: \textit{West Siang District at a Glance 2004}, p.12, Published by Economic and Statistics Department, Along.
a major portion of Sike valley between Mega in the south and Gasheng in the north.

The tribal communities of this district speak different dialects with little resemblance. All these communities claim to have descended from the same forefather *Abotani*. The communities inhabiting in the district ethnically belong to Tibeto-Mongoloid stock. All these communities believe that they had migrated to the present place of habitation from a place somewhere in Tibet i.e. corroborated by their folklores and oral literatures. However, nobody knows how long ago they had migrated from their original place to the present place.

**Religious Beliefs and Practices**

The religious beliefs and practices of the people of West Siang district are more or less similar. They believed in the existence of numerous 'Wooyu' (benevolent as well as malevolent). They believed *Donyi-Polo* as God and Goddess. *Donyi* is considered as female whereas *Polo* as male. They believed that both *Donyi* and *Polo* used to watch the every action of human being on the earth and energize the functioning of the universe. Besides, they hold that all sorts of suffering are caused by different Gods and Goddess. They used to argue that the blessings of their God can be felt in the form of sunshine, wind, rain etc. Generally they do not offer any special sacrifice to their God but worshipping is a need base religious practice among these people.

In the recent past, with the advent of modern education, scientific and technical knowledge, there emerged many changes in the religious practices among the people of this region. Taboos and religious restrictions have been relaxed in many cases.
Besides, many of them embraced Christianity. This trend has been given impetus because of the establishment of Christian school and by preaching of the Christian Missionaries.

**Festivals**

Festivals are the mirror of people’s culture and most of them are closely connected with their occupation. Their dominant rituals are therefore, mostly linked with agriculture, thanking God for bumper crop and praying for golden harvest. The most common practices in the festivals are animal sacrifices. Their religious rituals largely coincide with farming. The major festivals observed by the people of this district are *Mopin, Solung, Donging, Losar* and *Dodi-Barbi*. *Mopin* is observed by the Galo community on 5th April every year to harness abundant agriculture production. The Minyong observed *Solung* on 1st September. The Bori community celebrates *Donging* on 2nd February and the *Dodi-Barbi*, festival of Bokar, Ramo and Pailibo is celebrated on 5th December every year.

**Economy & Land holding**

In West Siang district more than 80 per cent of total population resides in the rural areas and their livelihood mainly depends upon agriculture which is based on socio-economic cultural structure. Infact, the economic life of the people of any particular region is normally depend on its climatic condition, physical and topographical features, soil as well as their ingenuity to devise means to improve a lot. The people adjust themselves to environment and as a result, a particular way of their life is evolved. The area, in which the people of West Siang district are inhabited, is hilly and rugged due to which they have been fighting with the nature for their survival and out of this
struggle emerged their way of life. Basically, the people of this district practices two types of cultivation, settled cultivation and jhum cultivation. Paddy, maize, pulse, vegetables are the crops grown depending on the climate and soil in settled cultivation. The crops like paddy, maize, millet, local pulses, vegetables kachuyam, tapioca, chilly, ginger, turmeric etc., are grown in jhum field.

The traditional economy of the people of this region was primarily based on food gathering, hunting, fishing and jhum or shifting cultivation and a small amount of trade by barter. Though, many of they have taken up horticulture, trade and business, shops, hotels and restaurant, government employment, industries and other professions, yet agriculture remains single main stay of the economy in the region. Perhaps it is the only possible way of sustaining such occupation in such topographic set-up. All the suitable land of the inhabitant parts has been brought either into Wet-Rice Cultivation (WRC) or Terraced Rice Cultivation (TRC). They called the permanent type of cultivation as Isi-Rike, which means wet field. Lured by prospects of fruit garden, on accessible and gentle slopes many farmers have converted their jhum land into fruits garden of pineapple, orange, bananas, etc. However, they are not able to sale their product due to lack of better and cheap means of transport and marketing facilities. Even in many developed areas, where physical constraints are considered no more hurdles, in these areas the social amenities such as credit and financial institutions and market facilities are also not available.

The land holding is strictly individual but there also exist community land. However, community land holding systems gradually declining due to expansion of family and by realizing
the importance of the forest resources in the present day. Thus, people now started to occupies the land for individual household whereas in early days there were practices of slash and burn. As per 2001 census the people living below poverty line are estimated to 26.8 per cent of rural population and 11.0 per cent of urban population.

Natural Resources

Till 1994, no intensive study has been done regarding availability of mineral resources in the study area. It was only in 1995, the government of Arunachal Pradesh established the Department of Geology and Mining to promote exploration of mineral resources of the state. Preliminary investigation was carried out by the department in some parts of the district and has confirmed huge deposits of lime stone, graphite, marble stone, etc. Deposit of lime stone is located near Kabu and Dali village and is estimated to 225.5 million tonnes and deposition of graphite schist is located in Tai village of Basar Sub-division with estimate reserves of 10.35 million tonnes down to the depth of 130 meters. An occurrence of marble stones and ferrous minerals like haematite and magnetite has also been noticed in the Mechuka Sub-Division and Tirbin circle of West Siang district. Besides, small pocket of grey coloured have been noticed at Paying Dam near Ngukong village. Apart from these natural resources the district is abundant in forest resources such as bamboo, Toko-Patta (Levistonia jankensiana), cane, medicinal plants and other forest products like timber, wild tuber, fruits and vegetables.³⁵

³⁵ Sources: West Siang District at a Glance 2004, p.11, op.cit.
Power

The district under present study possesses immense potential for generation of Hydro-Power by virtue of its topography and numbers of turbulent rivers. According to the investigation made by National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), the total hydro power potential of the district is more than 13400 MW, which accounts for around 50 per cent of the state’s power potentials. If half of the available hydro-power potential of the district is harnessed, the state will not only be self-sufficient in meetings its own power requirement but also can earn huge revenue by supplying power to the neighbouring states of our country. The micro-hydel installed and functioning in the district are Dali micro-hydel, Aalo micro-hydel, Yomcha micro-hydel, Tato micro-hydel, Pangi micro-hydel, Mechuka micro-hydel, Siru-Tali micro-hydel etc. However, inspite of huge hydro-power potential, the people of the study area are in acute shortage of power supply.

Division of Labour

According to 2001 census, West Siang district has 36,590 main workers which constitute 85.37 per cent of the total workers. Out of this 25,176 are male workers constituting 68.80 per cent and 16,821 are female workers, constitute 45.97 per cent of the total workers. Out of total main workers 27,103, cultivators, constitute 89.4 per cent, 1005 are agricultural labours that constitute 3.31 per cent and 5,397 are marginal workers constitute 17.80- per cent.
Table 1.1: Distribution of main workers, marginal workers, cultivators and agricultural labours (as per 2001 census)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R/U</th>
<th>Total Workers</th>
<th>Main Workers</th>
<th>Marginal Workers</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agriculture labours</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>19460</td>
<td>15830</td>
<td>35290</td>
<td>19460</td>
<td>15830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>6129</td>
<td>1443</td>
<td>7570</td>
<td>5716</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Administrative set-up

The administrative set-up of West Siang district is based on the legacy of single line administration for maintaining cohesion and speedy development of the area. Thus, the district is divided into six sub-division viz. Aalo, Rumgong, Basar, Likabali, Yomcha and Mechuka. There are nine Community Blocks and twenty Circles. Among the circles, Aalo has the highest population with 31,449, followed by Basar circle with 11,735 and Likabali circle with 6,272.

Aalo sub-division is directly place under the charge of Deputy Commissioner whereas other sub-divisions are placed under the charge of (SDO) Sub-Divisional Officer. Each circle is placed under the charge of either Extra-Assistant Commissioner or a Circle Officer. The sub-divisions placed under the charge of Sub-Division Officer (SDO) are Rumgong, Likabali and Yomcha and the circles placed under the charge of Extra Assistant Commissioner (EAC) are Aalo and Darak. Further, the circles that placed under the charge of Additional Deputy Commissioner
(ADC) are Kamba and Mechuka and the circles placed under the charge of Circle Officer (CO) are Bagra, Jomlo-Mobuk, Kaying, Payum, Tirbin, Daring, Kangku, Gensi, Lirmba, Monigong, Pidi and Tato.36

**Educational Facilities**

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh runs 238 educational institutions, which includes 166 primary school, 48 middle schools, 16 secondary, 7 higher secondary and 1 degree college in the district. Apart from government educational institutions there are other educational institutions run by private organisations such as, San Francisco Saint College, R.K. Mission Higher Secondary school, V.K.V secondary school at Jirdin village, five middle schools and seven primary schools.

As per 2001 census, literacy rate of the district is 48.8 per cent and rank 4th in the State. Out of this, 58.5 per cent constitute male and female constitutes 41.4 per cent.37

**Village Council**

The traditional Village Council of the tribes of West Siang district is almost similar. To put the Village Council of the people of these tribal communities into category is difficult. This is because of our efforts to study the traditional way by applying the modern concepts of political science which gives us either too narrow or too general in our understanding. Since time immemorial, the traditional Village Councils have been very strong and the village often acted like sovereign bodies deciding all the internal matters. Basically, the Village Council performed

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36 Statistical Handbook of West Siang District, Department of Economic and Statistic, 2003-04, p.4.
37 D.D.S.E., Aalo, op.cit.
three types of functions, viz. Judicial, Administrative and Developmental Activities. The Village Council is called *Kebang* in Minyong, Bokar and Pialibo. *Keba* among Galo and *Bange* among Bori. The Memba and Khamba who are closely resembled with the Monpa have also strong village council. The village Council of Khamba is called *Jheme*. They have two councils viz. *Khampu* and *Tsondi* which deals with judicial matters and developmental works respectively. The Membas called the village council as *Berim* and it is of arbiter with gerontocracy system. The disputes are settled as per their traditional laws. The impact of Buddhism is well noticed in the functioning of the *Berim*.

The Village Councils of all the tribes of the region are in hierarchal form except Memba and Khamba. However, the name of this hierarchy differs from one another. For example, among Galo and Minyong, the apex body is called as *Bogum-Boka Keba*, which is organized to settle inter-village dispute, *Bane Keba*, at the village level to look after the day to day administration of the village and *Dolu Keba* at concern village which meet occasionally whenever necessary. The selection of leadership in the village council is made on the basis of ability and capacity of well versed in tribe’s mythology, customary codes and traditional history. The leader of the village council is called *Keba Abo*. Another term used for *Keba-Abo* in the past is *Nyikok* which means a man who can speak in a dominating tone like leader cock in the group of fowls. Such man is considered as consensus *Gam* or *Gaon-Burah*. All the communities of the district have common cultural traits like existence of independent village, absence of chieftainship and existence of a code of customary laws for controlling corporate life.
Panchayati Raj

Like other district of the State, the West Siang district also conducted election to constitute new Panchayat bodies on 2\textsuperscript{nd} April, 2003, followed the constitutional provision of 73\textsuperscript{rd} Amendment Act, with the notification of the Govt. of Arunachal Pradesh Panchayat Raj Act, 1997, dated the 30\textsuperscript{th} April 2001. The Act envisages for Three-tier Panchayat bodies with Gram Panchayat at village level, Anchal Samiti at block level and Zila Parishad at district level.\textsuperscript{38} Since its formation, the Panchayat bodies are trying their best for the development of the area as well as to improve the quality of the life of the people.

Table 1.2: Statement showing details number of Panchayat Members of West Siang District (Male & Female break-up in each Tier)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zila Member</th>
<th>Parishad</th>
<th>Anchal Member</th>
<th>Samiti</th>
<th>Gram Member</th>
<th>Panchayat</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Siang</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A

1. Female=367
2. Male = 689
3. Grand Total = 1056

(Elected Member of West Siang District)