

CHAPTER-I

“My notion of democracy is that under if the weakest shall have the same opportunities as the strongest..... true democracy cannot be worked out by twenty men sitting at the Center. It has to be worked from the below, by the people of every village”- Mahatma Gandhi

1. Introduction:

The Pre-Independence period marked the socio-political and economic exploitation of Colonial master. This period was characterised by poverty, hunger, backwardness, socio-economic inequalities etc. both in rural and urban India. The primary question in Post-Independence India for the “Architect of Constitution” ought to have remained a challenging task to provide a structural framework of decentralised autonomy at various level of government wherein the sections of all people can share and fulfil their aspirations. The rationale was thus, to establish a decentralised structure “wherein, the socio-economic, cultural and political aspiration of diverse groups of people could be accommodate and integrate with proportionate share into the Indian democracy through association at grass root level of governance. Keeping in view the sufferings and sacrifices of the masses throughout the freedom struggle, a vibrant challenge for the constitution framer ought to have remain in laying down of a foundation that can address not only the common cherish goals of the masses but at the same time that can also deliver socio-political and economic equality, justice and welfare of diverse sections of people in free India through the provision of self rule instituted by the local government institution.

Thus, in response to the quest for setting of effective political mechanism at village level, oriented to poverty alleviation and rural development, the constitution of India; while, recognizing the principle of right to self determination, adhering the principles of equality, justice and development have enumerated the provision for local self government institution under the constitutional schema namely-

- i. Fifth Schedule, for schedule areas and tribes other than North Eastern States and
- ii. Sixth Schedule, for the North Eastern States of India like Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Tripura and Arunachal Pradesh.

In backdrop of the long political struggle of the Bodo tribal for the greater political autonomy under the Constitutional framework, BTAD was subsequently created as self-governing institution under the later framework through the tripartite agreement called Memorandum of Settlement (MOS) dated 10.02.2003 signed between the Govt. of India, Govt. of Assam and the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT). The aim of the BTC is-

- i. To fulfil the economic, educational & linguistic aspirations & preservation of land rights, socio-cultural & ethnic identity of Bodos and
- ii. To speed-up infrastructure development in BTC area.¹

Traditionally, the desire to have a grass root government institutions in India is not a new; rather, the rationale for Village Panchayat at the bottom has been the foremost priority for many popular visionary Indian leaders throughout the varying generations. In this respect, Gandhiji was undoubtedly a torch bearer firmly

¹ Some Important Acts and Amendment of Indian Constitution Concerning Bodoland Territorial Council, Published by Dept. Of Printing and Stationary. P-1 (Second Edition-2010)

advocating the Panchayat System. Gandhiji, while determining the importance of Panchayat System at the village level have asserted the ideas that- *“The village republic will be managed by a Panchayat which will be living political force and entity. Panchayats will be united in a free and voluntary association by ever widening circle of “village republic”. It will not be an “apex sustained by the bottom”.*² Thus, the rationale of having village panchayat for exercising political and economic affairs across the nation could be found widely acclaimed in Gandhiji’s remark.

However, in Sixth Schedule areas, unlike other districts of Assam, Gaon Panchayat ceases to operate in BTAD. In lieu of it VCDC is the local government body in BTAD areas. VCDC like Gaon Panchayat is entrusted with important powers and functions to carry out the rural development schemes of the government. As an authorised local body it has been assigned with great responsibility for village development.

In recent years, this subject has been able to grab the attention of handful aspirant scholars to make an intensive study into various roles of VCDC in the development of socio-economic and political field at the grass root level. The present study is an attempt to make an investigation in this direction.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Far from development BTAD region of Assam had suffered a severe poverty even after fifty years of Independence. This region remained untouched by the light of development for so many years when other parts of Assam have already had accessed to the process of modernisation. The honesty, simplicity, ignorance, illiteracy of the

² Ed. By G. Palanithurai: Dynamics of New Panchayati Raj System in India: Select States,-2002, P-xiii

people of this area had subsequently meted with socio-economic discrimination and political subjugation, thereby, keeping this particular region of BTAD far from development. This area has been deprived of basic infrastructural development year after year. The instant discrimination and exploitation however came as a blessing in disguise to the people of this region. Of late, the political renaissance in this region with the creation of BTAD have brought new dawn of all round development.

BTAD was created in 2003 with its primary objective to bring socio- economic development in this part of Assam. BTAD is entrusted with certain amount of legislative and executive power to initiate development programmes of its own to bring rapid development in this region. The Council since its inception has shown a great commitment and potential towards bringing the socio-economic progress to the people of this region. However, the accountability and transparency in the administration of BTAD has been questioned from time to time from various spectrums. Undoubtedly, it can be instrumental in securing rapid development in the manner it desires if the administrators work in professional manner in implementing developmental programmes. Since, Panchayati Raj system ceases to be in force in the council area, the powers of the Panchayati Raj Institution in such matters have been vested to the Council. In lieu of the Panchayati Raj system, BTC has two tier of grass root institution viz. Territorial Constituency Level Coordination Committee (TCLCC) at Block level and VCDC at village level. Notably, the Council it-self operates at the district level. The developmental functions at the base are exercise by the VCDC.

VCDC at the bottom carries a vital responsibility to develop the rural areas. As a grass root government it has far reaching implications in rural areas. Since, more

than 90 percent of BTAD region covers with villages the phenomena of development in the villages have been very gradual. And, going by the general perception of the people, the villages under Kokrajhar Development Block, Titaguri, in particular had suffered the plight of bad infrastructural facilities, communication and road connectivity, medical health facilities, lack of employment opportunities, good educational institution, good housing and proper sanitation, modern irrigation facilities etc. when most of the districts outside BTAD have already had access to such facilities prior to set up of the Council. Nevertheless, it can transform poor villages into model village. It can be an instrument of change. It can play a vital role in transforming the fate of poverty stricken rural populations. In adverse the role of VCDC in many circumstances met with propagation; in many times repudiation too which make their role utter critical.

In recent years the growing differences of notion in public domain among various vested sections of political community had raised the eyeballs of conscious public community. One domain had its notion that, in recent years with the set up of Council, the villages of these regions have seen improved in all sectors. However, the other domain, have their notions that VCDC is ineffective and is doing very little to bring transformation in rural areas; rather, the VCDC members are time and again alleged of indulging in rampant malicious practice.

Though, the bird eye view of the region give an account of turning up a few small scale industries in recent years in the sector of agro-farming, fishery, weaving, horticulture, sericulture, tea and rubber plantation and manufacturing mineral water etc. but the region still lagged in large scale industries. Due to the lack of such

facilities the employment opportunities for the countryman in this region is significantly very less. Remarkably, the societies with industrially and commercially developed is considered to be more prosperous in terms of socio- economic prosperity as well as in living standard. But, the villages under Kokrajhar Development Block are still to come up with facilitating the basic facilities and infrastructures at the rural areas. The persistent of such developmental problems in rural areas makes life hard in their day to day living. These problems are inherited from socio-economic discrimination and its impact still continues to be relevant in the present. The reconstruction of socio-economic and political conditions of rural population of BTAD still remains a prime concern.

VCDC as a responsible and authorised local body in recent years has opened a new horizon for the researchers. In recent years, it has aroused a handful of aspirant scholars to set their feet on this field. With this end in the mind, it would be very pertinent to make intensive investigation into the role of VCDC in rural development in reference to Kokrajhar Development Block, Titaguri, kokrajhar. Here, the study intends to explore the role of VCDC in rural development with special focus on the socio-economic development and political aspects.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The study is significant from various perspectives. Considering, both the objectives of the present study and the general perspective of the people, the study will attempt to highlight few focused areas.

BTAD as a District Council administration is very new in origin with just over 15 years of its existence. The research work in this field is also relatively very

less. VCDC as popularly known government setup at the base is arranged within BTAD in lieu of Panchayat is a very new field. The research investigation upon VCDC is relatively small till date. In fact, VCDC still remain a virgin area. Though, it has attracted few scholars in recent years, yet it still remains an undisputed territory in the field of research. Hence, it offers a new field for investigation to the researcher. In this backdrop, the study will undoubtedly fetch new ideas and information to the researcher in particular and as a whole in general.

Based on the objectives of the study, the researcher intends to understand the role of VCDC in rural development with special focused on socio-economic aspects. In this backdrop, the study intends to explore the rural areas of selected VCDC under Kokrajhar Development Block, Titaguri. The study is significant from the point of view that it would help the researcher to understand the true pictures of the rural socio-economic profile of the study area. It will enable the researcher to bring various persistent problems of rural areas into light. It will enable the researcher to find out the effectiveness of VCDC as a local government body in execution of various poverty alleviation measures and other government programmes mean for rural development. On account of socio-economic development the leadership plays a decisive role. On this account, the study would help in determining the leadership of VCDC members; both in their resource mobilisation and management of human as well as physical resources available in local areas. Therefore, the study would help the researcher to explore both positive and negative sides of VCDC in its implementation and execution of the developmental policies of the government. And, based on that account the

evaluation on the role of VCDC in socio-economic development of rural areas could be possibly drawn.

Based on another focused objective of the present study the investigation would help to measure the level of active participation of the people in the working process of VCDC. Traditionally, the ensuring of political empowerment to the rural people in general and the women in particular has been an old effort of the government through their representation in the local government bodies. In this backdrop, the study would help to evaluate the role of VCDC in political empowerment of rural people. Besides, the investigation would help to fathom the researcher to identify and comprehend the position of the common people as a conscious political being.

Again, going by the popular notion of the general people VCDC as a local government institution occupies least esteem; since its nature and degree of accountability and transparency comes under instant suspects. VCDC often meet allegations of corruption, nepotism, non-democratic, poor-public approach, mismanagement of funds and resources and so on from various public domains. Considering this, the study will throw a light on this serious matter to unveil the truth. Further, the study will enable to unearth its nature and intention towards public welfare and rural development in general through the assessment on various published government reports and people's perspective on its achievements and failures.

Considering the above overviews the overall study of VCDC assumes important place not only from the socio-economic point of views but also as government institution at local level entrusted with great responsibility to empower the

rural people politically. The study will not only enlighten the researcher, may also it help in making public aware about various public welfare measures and rural development schemes. Hence, the study of VCDC and its role in rural development offers a vast scope not only to enrich the personal knowledge of the researcher; may it also help to come up with new findings and suggestions in the field.

1.4 Review of Literature:

Literature review is a logical requirement to identify the research problem. It gives a philosophical foundation to the researcher on the research problem undertaken for the study. A study of vast literature is very important for the researcher to enrich the knowledge and in-depth understanding of the subject matter. Having a good command over the subject matter is well desired for any researcher so as to keep them prepared from every possibilities of encountering erroneous and difficulties in the process of research work. A close examination of the studies would also help to locate the gap between the literature and the perception of the researcher and accordingly identify the new dimensions essential for the detailed procedures of the study under consideration.

While carrying out review of literature, there are a bulk of books available related to Rural Development. However, the researches on the subject relevant to VCDC and rural development in a state is least in the form of books or in any other form although fairly large numbers of studies had been carried on the various facets of Panchayati Raj and rural development. Since, VCDC functions in a manner of village Panchayat, the literature review in this backdrop has been carried largely on Panchayati Raj and Rural Development.

The rural development programmes as mentioned by B. Rambhai, (1959) in his work “The Silent Revolution” and V.P Pandey (1967) in his work “Village Community Projects in India, could be traced back as early as in the middle of the 19th century, when the Western Christian Missionaries and social workers initiated several rural reconstruction in India.

M.S Randhawa’s book “Developing Villages in India” explains that the rural development in India gained its popularity and received mass support alongside national movement with Gandhiji’s association in politics. Thus, the strong national consensus for rural development in India has its root in national movement.

B.C Barik (edition: 2014) in his book, “Rural Development in India” writes that rural infrastructure in India is not suitable to take on the emerging challenges of globalisation to rural economy even though it was much more improved prior to economic reform. He argued that with the rise in consumerism, the worthy of traditional rural activities are declining, neither rural skills are properly tapped nor utilised. He also argued that the rural technologies are also advancing gradually to meet the needs of unemployed rural youth. Also, the rural artisan have failed to grab their place in the rural economic arena, due to the lack of adequate opportunities to improve upon their worth. He also stressed on the need of involving the poor recipients in planning and implementing development policies.

Having stated that the problems and prospects of rural societies of developed nations and developing nations differ, it can be well demarcated on many grounds especially in their approaches and strategy of development. The rural folks in developing societies are not only deprived of socially and economically but also

remain politically passive and culturally oppressed. Many rural societies of developing states still lives with primitive cultures and traditional way of living far from modern urban cultures. This isolation of rural and urban cultures in developing societies have distant the problems to catch up in modernising the rural societies. They are not just poor and ignorant, but have multiple problems such as poverty, illiteracy, ill-health, unemployment, inequality in income and wealth. Thus, the problems of developing societies are not only multi-faceted in nature but also very giant and complex.

In that context, G.R. Madan and Tara Madan in their book 'Village Development in India: A Sociological Approach' (1988), sought a Sociological approach in determining the village development problems in all major aspect like economic, technological, social, religious, cultural, political and administrative.”

While, Chambers (1983) in his book entitled “Rural Development; Putting the last first”, specifically emphasised on identifying the needed most and poor and accordingly classified them into targeted groups. He included in his targeted group- the poorest of the poor including man, women and children, small-scale farmers, landless labourers and tenants. He critically analysed and favoured the poorest to be put in the first place in order to narrow down the gap between the rich and the poor.” The “Asbridge Conference on Social Development” called for an active participation of the local community in the development process. It also emphasized that rural development should aim at the promotion of better living for the whole community.”

H. Kr. Mantrawadi in his book “Public Policy and Rural Development” writes that the government of developing countries in recent years have expressed the desire to improve their service for national development. He expressed that formulation of

policies for alleviating poverty and improving the quality of life of all sections of society is an urgent needs. Further, he assert that for the realisation of such objectives the government of developing countries have to stabilise their economies, strengthen their political system and bring sustained improvement in their social systems.

Rural Development in recent decades surfaced as a government mandate administrative setup to ensure and to pace up the implementation of rural development schemes. Since 1960s, rural development has been receiving a central focus not only in the fund allocation but also in the planning process at the national level. Inspite, of that due to Mahalanobis model of economic development the maximum benefits are enjoyed by industrial sectors and hardly the benefits are percolated to the villages.

Reference could be made of Janata Government when attempted to revive the democratic institutions and welfare ethos afresh by constituting a couple of expert committees to set the development perspective. The Ashok Mehta Committee appointed in 1977 to study “the working of Panchayati Raj System also viewed that the Panchayati Raj System was not only meant for decentralisation of power and people’s participation, but it was also for supporting rural development and strengthening the planning process at the micro level (GoI, 1978).” The Singhvi Committee (1986) which was set up to prepare the concept paper on Panchayati Raj also wanted Panchayati Raj Institutions to be closely involved in planning and implementation of rural development programmes at lower level. (GoI, 1986)

Singh K. K. and S. Ali (2001), who in their synopsis titled “Role of Panchayati Raj Institution for Rural Development” while talking about poverty alleviation and rural development had emphasised on the needs of effective implementation of policy

at grass root level. They argued that along with formulation of growth strategy to remove poverty, the additional special programmes are also required. They prescribed three broad policies– 1) to increase the asset holding of the poor through land reforms and programmes (like IRDP) 2) to increase the wage incomes of poor through programmes (like NREP and RLEGP) 3) to improve the access of the poor to the minimum needs. They stressed on the need of planning to accelerate the agricultural growth. They also stressed on planning and strategies for employment generation to reduced poverty.

On the other hand, Shriram Maheshwari in his work entitled “Rural Development in India” (1985) had observed that the present administrative system of India is inherited from colonial master, which is still being followed by the officers and bureaucrats responsible for the implementation and execution of rural development schemes. Thus, it won't be a realistic to expect any productive result from old machinery of colonial system with a new constitutional framework, as it would be subjected to various environmental forces and pressures.

A. R Bhattacharjee conducted a study on Panchayat Raj and Block Area Development. His study covered the financial aspect and leadership of Gaon Panchayat in Tripura. He examined the role of leaders and the members of this local institution along with its performance in the development of rural areas.

S.G. Deogaonkar (1980), in his book 'Administration for Rural Development in India' believed that the failure and success of rural development largely relay on the performances of village level workers. Hence, while stressing on the importance of selecting the right person at the local level body had also emphasised on equipping

with considerable autonomy and sufficient resources. On the other hand, B.S. Khanna (1991), in his book 'Rural Development in South Asia, India', observed that Block Development had gone considerably weak in the mid sixties due to decline in the Development Community programme and due to more focussed on the sectoral programmes of rural development.

A.K. Agarwal (1991), in his article 'Dynamics of Rural Development in Mizoram', figured out that the entire North East State including Mizoram suffers an administrative infrastructural deficit for planning the programmes and implementation. Further, he argued that the absence of training facilities in this region also discourages the grassroots level workers.

P.S Kamble (2008), in his paper "Role of Village Panchayat in the Rural Development of Kolhapur District," had investigated the financial status of Village Panchayat in Kolhapur District. He found that Village Panchayat being the local government body is vital mechanism for rural development. The study revealed that Village Panchayat mainly depends on taxes as their source of income and other grants for development activities in rural areas."

Now a day's rural development has remarkably shifted its focus on planning at local level for effective utilisation of rural resources because the effective management of resources is very crucial for the development. Its vitality could be understood from the fact that every country prefers a planning in all institutional level i.e. local, regional and national.

In this connection, Surendra Singh in his book "Rural Development and Planning" (1988) had categories the resources into three- natural resources, land

resource and human resources. Further, he advocated the need for integrated development planning for ensuring balanced and effectively utilization of local resources.

Debidas M. Muley" (1987), in his book 'Rural Development Administration' while suggesting the requisite of formulation of realistic plan have also argued that the effective implementation of it is possible only with the local bodies having viable and sound structure. He sought for both large units and smaller units to carry out developmental policies and programmes.”

C. Harichandran (1983), in his study “Panchayat and Rural Development: A Study of Tamil Nadu had examined two Panchayat Unions and four Panchayats. He analysed the economic aspect of a particular period, 1961-62 and 1973-74 respectively with a view to evaluate the revenue inflow, expenditure and physical achievements of the given period. The study found that with the increase in expenditure under health, water supply and welfare the total revenue of the given period also increased. The study also revealed that the union had invested more expenditure on the development programmes rather than maintenance work.

Dinesh G. M. and Mangala A. Nayak (2005) in their work entitled “Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha in Rural Development: A Review of Karnataka Experience”, had advocated that Gram Sabha is the utmost important institution where local people can effectively participate in the rural development. Their study highlighted the problems and prospects and the issues like powers, functions and failure of Gram Sabha and Ward Sabha in Karnataka. Their study also outlined the issues like role of women in Gram Sabha. Their study revealed that women are not proportionately

represented and hence, they are ignored in decision making process as well as the selection process of beneficiary is also fairly unjust. The study also discovered that the officers concern is also not punctual in discharging their duties to aware the public about new schemes and their implementation.

D.K Desai (1983) in “Management in Rural Development” put forth the importance of management in rural development plans and policies for productive and laid emphasised on concerned government administration deals with rural development.

Hoshiar Singh (1995) in his work entitled “Administration of Rural Development in India” observed that rural development have gained its popularity in nationwide and had been able to drawn the attention of both in State and National level not only from the government but also from all political parties. Indeed, it has occupied the top priority at national level planning.

P. Pradhan in his book “Role of Institutions in Rural Community Development”(1999) and N.T Uphoff in his book “The Role of Institutions in Rural Community Development, Asian”(1999) states that local institution plays a significant role in mobilisation of rural resources. While Sachchidanda in his book “Searching for an Alternative Development Strategy in Rural Development in Asia” (1982), emphasised that the rural problems can be effectively tackled by the micro level planning. He maintained that development requires mobilization of people’s participation and planning from the bottom level.”

B.J. Kadam (2008) in his paper “Village Panchayats and Rural Development,” while investigating the income/revenue status of Village Panchayat in

Kolhapur District had examined six Panchayats. The finding of the study revealed that all the Village Panchayats under examined have suffered the financial deficits. He argued that Village Panchayat has been playing a vital role in rural development however, it is insufficient. And, hence he feels that insufficient revenue, deficits, delay of capital receipts and other anomalies obstruct the economic development as well as capital expenditure in rural development. He also suggested that adequate revenue mobilisation is necessary to meet up on spending for, education, water supply, agriculture, environment protection, etc.”

Vivek Saurath (2012) in his book “Rural Development Planning Strategy and Policy Imperatives” writes that several attempts have been made to uplift the rural poor. Further, he writes that the creation of Panchayat in 1959 is considered to be not only an innovation but also a revolution. It was created with an objective of ensuring/entrusting responsibility and authority to the rural people for rural development.

In their book 'Problems in Rural Development' (1985), Ramashray Roy, T.M. Vinod Kumar and V.B. Singhv gave importance on the needs of developing a planning at the Block level administration. E.D. Setty", in his book 'New Approaches to Rural Development', (2002), have suggested several guidelines and principles for the Block employees to be observed while assisting the Village Panchayats and Panchayats Samiti in determining and identifying the problems of villages and accordingly to develop the policies and programmes to improve the conditions of villages.

On the other hand R.C Kothari (1991) in his book “Rural Development, Strategy for Rural Development” had perceived that development programmes in

India had only touched the surface and in such a state micro planning approach won't be effective to solve the multi-dimensional problems of rural India.”

The review of literatures gives wide account of different ideas of different writers and scholars. The literatures are well informative on different issues of rural development and the role of local government bodies and Panchayats. From the above review of literatures it is quite clear that the rural development assumed top priorities in India. The phenomena of development in rural areas has been looked from various perspectives and approaches like planning and policies, strategies, devolution of powers to local bodies and application of technologies etc. Whatever be the perspectives and approaches are, the Indian scenario gives an acute pictures of rural areas and for transforming it various poverty alleviation measures has been primary objectives of the Government at various levels to do away with rural poverty.

1.5 Objective of the Study

- i. To study the role of VCDC in Socio-Economic development in rural areas under Kokrajhar Development Block, Titaguri.
- ii. To find out the participation of rural people in the working of VCDC in the process of rural development.
- iii. To find out the achievements and failures of VCDC in implementing the Government Schemes in rural areas.

1.6 Hypotheses:

- i. VCDC has ensured the rapid Socio-Economic transformation in rural areas under Kokrajhar Development Block, Kokrajhar.
- ii. VCDC has enriched the political empowerment of rural people.
- iii. VCDC has played an important role in rural development.

1.7 Methodology:

Methodology is logic of scientific investigation. It is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study. The research methods are of utmost importance in research process. It is a plan and procedure for carrying out the research. It refers to research technique and strategies for obtaining valid information.

Since methodology assumed most important part of any research work, therefore, with a view to fulfil the research objective and to decide the set hypotheses a specific research methodology was design. Considering, its necessity, the methodology applied for the research concern can be thus grouped into three distinct parts; namely,

1. Document Review
2. Questionnaire- Close Ended and Open Ended.
3. Focus/Targeted Group Discussion

First, in document review, taking the stock of available secondary source and relevant information, an attempt has been made to evaluate the rural development and the role of local government bodies' i.e Panchayat and VDC. Taking the available stock of the published government reports and various departmental activities reports of the past years the researcher would cross examined the plans and policies implemented and their physical achievements. The document reviews would guides the researchers to determine various dimensions of problems and prospects of rural societies and its phenomena of development. Further, this would help the researcher to evaluate the strength and weakness of the local government bodies in its role of development activities. The document review would help the researcher to acquire a

broad outlook about the problems and accordingly, enable the researcher to draw the research design in a manner to obtain desirable results of the set objectives and hypotheses.

The second part deals with the interview of the respondents of the selected villages in six VCDC under Kokrajhar Development Block, Titaguri, so as to acquire primary information on the problem under study. This constitutes most important part of the present study since it provides necessary inputs to come out with the outputs. It assumes most important place in the present study since the problem under study is new and the secondary sources are least. The present study relies largely on the interview method to establish path-breaking research outcome. This part would help the researcher to evaluate the research objectives and determine the hypotheses in the light of primary information acquired. This part would help to obtain development indicators necessary to determine the role of VCDC in rural development. Based on such findings the fate of the hypotheses would be determined.

Finally, in the third stage, Focus Group Discussion was conducted to obtain qualitative judgement of the concerned people of the targeted categories. Here, the discussion was carried out mainly with the VCDC Chairman and VCDC members and other resource persons of the area. It helped the researcher to obtain the total pictures of the working process of the VCDC and accordingly enabled the researcher to develop a sound opinion based on which the basic philosophical foundation of the research was built. It also helped the researcher to make comparative evaluation of the opinions of both the respondents and the workers of the VCDC. This helped the researcher to cross examine the pros and cons of the VCDC with an eagle eye;

fetching the researcher with depth understanding on the subject-matter requisite to draw a broad framework to arrive at conclusion in a desirable manner.

The methodology applied for the problem understudy involved both quantitative and qualitative approach. The study is analytical and explanatory in nature. Questionnaire and Interview methods are the central foundation of this study in which the quest of the researcher was established in the manner it was desired.

1.7.1 Methods of Data Collection:

The data required to study the problem was mainly collected from two sources by using different methods. The main two sources of data are-

i) **Primary Sources:** Primary data are collected by the investigator for scientific study. This data is original in character and is generated through surveys conducted by the researcher. The data are mainly acquired from the respondents through interviews and group discussions conducted in the selected VCDCs under Kokrajhar Development Block, Titaguri, Kokrajhar. And, for this purpose two separate sets of questionnaire were carefully designed targeting both the residents of the selected villages and the members of the VCDC. The samples were collected from the villages of six VCDCs under Kokrajhar Development Block, Titaguri. The number of samples collected was 1/3 proportion of total household under each village.

ii) **Secondary Sources:** Secondary source is one which has already been collected by some other individual or agency, which includes relevant literatures, published and unpublished, journals, reports, news paper, government documents, government publications, Memorandum of Settlement, Research Organisation and so on. Here, the researcher has reviewed all the relevant sources available required for the

study of the problem and accordingly, applied the relevant resources specially in consolidating the theoretical framework of the research problem. The application of secondary sources emphasised on inputs acquired from government reports, books, government documents like MoS, Statistical Hand Books & Economic Survey Report published by concerned departments and several publications to ensure the authenticity of the research as far as possible.

1.8 Limitations of the Study:

Despite of significant contribution in the literature of rural development and the role of local government body, the present study suffers from few limitations. Though, VCDC works in a manner of Gaon Panchayat, the preliminary enquiry led to discover many differences between Gaon Panchayat and VCDC in nature and scope. This difference makes the later field new 'thereby, increasing the probability of scarcity of secondary data. Despite of vast secondary sources on rural development and the role of Panchayat System, however, very little and specific information is available on the role of VCDC in rural development. Considering, the limited resources in hand and scarcity of written information on the VCDC, the study relied largely on the raw information acquired through interviews, group discussions and partly observation of the researcher. The reference information for the study is mainly comprehended from the relevant secondary sources like- Statistical Hand Book, Assam, Economic Survey BTAD, MoS, etc. Despite of limited resources in hand the researcher has made all possible efforts to keep the research intact and authentic the findings thereto.

This chapter deal with the overall intention of the researcher. The researcher has discussed the origin of the problems, the significance of the study. And based on primary input obtained through preliminary enquiry at ground level and through literature review on the subject matter the objectives of the study were fixed with an intention to explore the role of VCDC in rural areas with special focus on the three set assumptions or hypotheses. This chapter also deal with the methodology and research designed used for the study. The researcher has applied mainly three methods- i) document reviews ii) questionnaire method; it mainly consist of both close ended and open ended questions for the respondents. iii) Focus/Targeted Group Discussion; it was mainly carried out with the VCDC members and other resource persons and activists.