

CHAPTER – V

5.1 Findings of the Study:

Based on the analysis of the data in previous chapter, the findings are attempted to evaluate taking into account the assumptions or hypotheses of the study. Based on findings the role of VCDC in rural development in special reference to the Kokrajhar Development Block is attempted to evaluate taking three main hypotheses. Thus, the evaluation shall be made under the following head:

5.1.1 VCDC has ensured the rapid Socio-Economic transformation in rural areas under Kokrajhar Development Block, Kokrajhar:

Keeping in mind the popular hypothesis that, local-self government not only empower the people politically but also empower socially and economically as well. Based on this hypothesis the study was conducted in six VCDC viz. Debargaon VCDC, Kalugaon-Subaijhar VCDC, Karigaon-Serfang VCDC, Simbargaon VCDC, Tinali-Chariali VCDC and Titaguri VCDC to assess the role of VCDC in Socio-Economic development of rural areas. In this direction, a quantitative study was conducted to measure this popular hypothesis through respondent's perspective. The study revealed that every villages under VCDC investigated have a high numbers of BPL households. It constitutes as high as 63%, in majority as against 37% APL households. Though, the BPL household are benefited with various government schemes like housing under IAY, food stuff under NFS and other useful materials and products like bi-cycle, filter, sewing machine, blankets, high yielding seeds, fertilizers, spray machines etc. from time to time by the government however, the members of

VCDC in their selection of beneficiaries have often met with allegation of making bias selection; taking bribes, favouritism to their near and dear one and the party workers and supporters of a particular political party. Again, VCDC has been alleged for misappropriation of funds means for the construction of IAY houses, delay and incomplete construction of housing, road repairing, canal, and culvert construction. There is frequent allegation of mismanagement against VCDC members in execution of works; it has been criticised by public for using poor quality of construction materials and poor quality of work in the construction and repairing roads, culverts and houses. Despite of 85% BPL household were benefited with housing under IAY many of the household are not satisfied with the convergence rate of different development programmes. Again, despite of majority household with 73% and 76% having been able to afford of using like LPG, toilet and sanitation facilities many of the people tend to repudiate the role of VCDC in their socio-economic upliftment. Again, in recent years people have argued that the employment opportunity has drastically reduced under MGNREGA eventually resulting in the rise of unemployment problems for many daily wagers. Besides, the literacy rate in the villages is very less. The illiteracy rate constitute higher amongst the middle aged population with 56% which are basically marginal farmers and the daily wagers. Since, education is considered to be the greatest weapon to conquer all the problems; perhaps it has been the roots of many problems of villages obstructing especially their socio-economic progress. Since, the areas also lack big industries the major occupational for larger households remain cultivations though, few numbers of industrial workers in recent years have witnessed growing with the establishment of

NTPC. The infrastructural development is vital for the overall development of rural areas. In this matter 75% of the rural people are satisfied with their existing rural road conditions but development in road alone can't bring total change or development of rural areas without developing other aspects equally. The rural electrification is also quite good however, the health care facilities in the medical sub-centre though has been little improved under Deargaon VCDC, Tinali-Charili VCDC yet people of the concern areas are not fully satisfied with the supply of medicine and the services of the staff. In case of school facilities every village have lower primary school within 1 Km and middle primary school within 2-3 Km. The majority with 70% of the rural population are somewhat satisfied with the existing school infrastructure although, these schools are not advanced as per standard of urban schools, having facilities like digital class room, advanced teaching aids and equipment, and library facilities.

In present days, the level of high consumptions and affording of a modern means of luxury or comfort like car, automobiles, bikes, LPG, TV etc. are considered to be a determinant of economic growth and progress. The household affording such facilities are somewhat considered to be a family with descent economic background. In this connection, the financial conditions of the household under the respective VCDC were evaluated based on their monthly income and as such the household were grouped into five categories in accordance with their monthly income. The study found that the lowest income group earning below three thousands constitute considerably high with 17% whereas the category with higher income group earning above fifteen thousand form barely 11%. The economic conditions of this lowest income group are very pity. Their economic misery had its impact in their social life as

well. They are the landless household i.e household with no cultivation land. This group is mainly the daily wagers. Their daily earning is uncertain; and the amount of wage also depends on the nature of work and the availability of work opportunity. They meet frequent work scarcity during off season of cultivation. Due to poverty their social development is also severely affected by the problems like poor living standard, proper educations, poor health and hygiene, fulfilment of basic needs and so on. Again, the economic conditions of lower middle-income group which constitute higher with 36% in index are also living in poor conditions. Most of the household from this group is basically marginal farmers which constitute 29%; whereas the tenant cultivators constitute majority with 42% and their economic condition is not much different with that of daily wagers. Their main source of earning is cultivation. They are mainly engaged in paddy cultivation; some with crop farming and other allied activities like livestock farming and so on. Though, this group constitute the majority in cultivation index but they possess very less in terms of land holding. This farmer's possession of cultivation land is very small and most of them are engaged in tenant cultivation. Due to their small land holding for cultivation these farmers cultivate on lease from the share croppers. They are socio-economically marginal. While, the household with middle-income group shares 24% and 12% respectively who are either a lower division employee in government services or a businessman running small business or business establishment or others. In case of land holding the respective 46% and 20% household possess land below 10 bhigas and above 10 bhigas respectively. This group shares better economic conditions and also hold control over larger land of cultivation. The raised of economic conditions of the marginal farmers

and the development of rural as a whole largely depends on the increase in the productivity of the agricultural products. And the increase in productivity of agricultural production depends on the proper irrigation system, and the application of modern means of agricultural tools like tractor, pumping sets and the use of high yielding seeds and so on. VCDC as a government body of village level has been expected to play a pioneering role in the likes of land development, developing proper irrigation system, providing high yielding seeds, organise skill training on scientific farming and so on. However, the irrigation facilities in the areas are poor. The majority of the farmer in the villages under Debargaon VCDC, Kalugaon VCDC, Karigaon Serfang VCDC and Simbargaon VCDC in particular are unhappy with the existing irrigation facilities. Under Debargaon and Kalugaon VCDC, most of the cultivators have a cultivation land near by the river bank. However, the farmers feel that despite of such advantage no irrigation channel has been built in the areas. Despite of having a good numbers of tributaries flowing across the region the irrigation facilities remain either poor or even in-exist. As a result, the farmers have to rely largely on the monsoon for the cultivation. Besides, there is no facility like water tank or ponds for harvesting rain water for the use in irrigation purpose. Again, only a handful of farmers are facilitated with modern tools like tractor and pumping sets for cultivation and rest of the majority with 85% still use traditional method of cultivation. As a result the agricultural productions still remain poor. It is quite clear from the above evaluation that the role of VCDC in developing the irrigation facilities and facilitating the necessity requisites like modern tools, capital support, technical support and skill training to the farmers has been very marginal and barely productive.

Though, 28% of the household feels that their economic condition in recent years has improved but the majority of them belong to the service holders. On the other end a considerably high with 15% feels that their economic condition is degrading instead. Again, the economic disparity in this region is quite high in compare to state and national index. And because of such economic disparity the standard of living of rural people still remain vitally unsolved issues despite of visibly improvement in the numbers of good housing under various government housing programmes. Thus, in connection to socio-economic development of the rural areas the role of VCDC remains underdog. More especially with a very weak autonomy and limited funds in hand VCDC can do very little to develop the rural areas. And, as such the improvement of economic conditions of the poor villagers appears an uphill task for the VCDC.

5.1.2 VCDC has enriched the political empowerment of rural people:

VCDC is a local government mechanism. It is a decentralised government organ operating at the bottom level. In a democracy decentralisation of authority and the functional devolution is highly demanded not only for the involvement of the local people in government decision making but also for ensuring wider mass participation for the success of democracy. In a democracy electoral process is considered to be crucial and one of the foremost vital instrument towards empowering people politically. However, it is a known fact that the members of VCDC are not elected through electoral process. The members are selected from amongst the supporters of the ruling political parties. In such case VCDC as a local government body is a setback for the democracy. However, the council government in matter of election for VCDC

has passed the Bill in 2012 which is yet to be approved by the Governor. In matter of holding elections respondents opinion were taken in which overwhelming 81% sought their favour for elections. On the other a small section of people turn against the election and rather favoured the selections of members from amongst the best qualified person. And some other sections also believed that holding too much election is waste of money and there is always a risk of sheer violence between the parties and opponents. Further, to have a clear mandate of people over the “political empowerment” a direct objective question was asked to the respondent in which 71% give their mandate in favour of the role of VCDC in promoting political empowerment among common people. However, 19% has turn down the role of VCDC in promoting political empowerment. In case of representation of the marginalised groups, women and other caste in the VCDC members there is a provision for the reservation for women members and for the other castes members. Most of the VCDC has at the least 2-3 members women in VCDC and for other caste at the least one seat is reserved. However, the peoples mandate shows that only 37% thinks that women are properly represented in VCDC. It is praiseworthy that Debargaon VCDC and Simbargaon VCDC have a women chairperson along with 3 and 2 others women members respectively. On the other end, the majority of the 47% think that women are not getting due share in the VCDC body. The success of democracy not only depends on the high rate of mass participation but also it requires active participation of well informed and educated citizens. In this concern the villages have very less literacy rate and well informed persons which is a setback for democracy. Again, the participation level of common people is quite low even though the figures show 66% of mass

participation. The participation of women is even lower measuring only 61% in index. Again, the representation of other castes people (SC/OBC) the majority of 57% thinks their representation in VCDC body is undermined. Again, the transparency and accountability is the determinant of not only the strong and matured democracy but also it reflects the level of urge for democratic principles among citizens as well as it reflects the level of consciousness among citizens about their government. In connection to accountability and transparency VCDC suffers a huge deficit. Since, the majority of respective 58% and 71% believed that VCDC is not accountable to the people nor it is transparent. This nature has made the common people looked VCDC with bad eye i.e. distrust in VCDC. Besides, VCDC doesn't convene Gram Sabha regularly within the period 6 of months. Majority have to say that VCDC rarely convene Gram Sabha. Despite of majority people think that VCDC has empowered the people politically but the level of mass participation in the affairs of VCDC is not convincing. Again, the political empowerment of the people in real sense could be claimed only when the common people can dictate and control over their government and make them transparent and accountable towards public. Nevertheless, in this matter VCDC is not total failure; rather, it is partly successful and partly failure.

5.1.3 VCDC plays an important role in rural development.

Taking into consideration the above assessment on the role of VCDC in socio-economic development and political empowerment of the rural people it is quite clear that VCDC is not total failure; rather it can be rightly claim to have seen both failure and modest success in rural development. While people's mandate was taken on the role of VCDC in rural development 49% mandate came against VCDC whereas, lesser

35% mandate was exercised favouring VCDC and the rest 18% have no clue about the role of VCDC in rural development. The mix reaction of the people over satisfaction and dissatisfaction in the role of VCDC in rural development further affirms the story of modest success in some fields like maintaining and improving rural infrastructure and political empowerment; on the other side failure in rapid transformation of socio-economic; issues like unabated corruption, mismanagement of resources, favouritism, delaying in implementation and so on makes people distrust upon the members of the VCDC. This issue has been prime concern of VCDC and so is a hindrance to the development of rural areas. The study has also discovered numbers of weaknesses like inefficacy of members which have more or less resulted in poor blue-print and road map for developmental activities. The limited funds also often strand the VCDC in carrying out developmental activities. Since it is not a statutory body it is not commissioned to levy taxes or generate revenues of their own. The financially non viable nature of VCDC often limits their potential. Again, the limited autonomy of VCDC doesn't give free hand in making plans and policies for the village development. They are too much dependent on the dictation of Council government. The non democratic process of selection of members also has made it non-pro public; lucrative and aggrandized institutions for many members having their vested interest. Again, the greedy nexus between Block Development Officers and the VCDC members have hindered VCDC in effective working for the rural development. Nevertheless, the brighter sign of VCDC is that in recent years majority of people with 50% have shown the declining trend in rampant corruption. It can be expected that as

VCDC grows matured and with growing education and alertness among the next generations it will become more effective to deliver a productive results.

5.2 Suggestions:

1. **Adopt by-laws:** VCDC doesn't have a clear constitution or written by laws. For smooth functioning of any institutions a written by laws is very essential. Due to presence of vagueness in by laws of VCDC, its members face often confusion.

2. **Strengthen Autonomy:** VCDC has a very weak autonomy. It enjoys less autonomy in compare to institution like Gram Panchayat. It has limited the VCDC to exercise in developmental work with free hand. It has restricted the tendencies of VCDC to initiate the plans and policies of their own since they are dictated by the Council government more or so often. It has hindered their functioning. Therefore, the devolution of more autonomy to VCDC is desirable.

3. **Make Financially Viable:** Funds and finance is vital for any task. VCDC is not commissioned to levy taxes or generate revenues of its own. This nature has made VCDC dependent too much on the Government grants to carry out developmental works. Again, very less incentive for the members has made them indulges in a corruption.

4. **Election for VCDC:** VCDC needs to be more democratized. The selection of VCDC members through non electoral process led to appointment of inefficient members. It has resulted in the weak performance of VCDC. Besides, this nature has made them loyal to only a particular section of political community denying collective

public interest. It has also made VCDC less accountable and transparent towards public; hence, arousing more or less frequent suspects in their activities.

5. Develop Pro-Public Approach: VCDC requires developing healthy relations with the people. Being a local government organ it has a responsibility to bridge the gap between the people and the government at the higher level. Therefore, VCDC should cultivate more pro-public attitudes and approach.

Conclusion:

Traditionally, the practice of local self government likes village panchayat has been existed since Vedic era. The system of local self government flourished during the course of British rule. It was during British rule the village panchayats were made statutory body. During post Independence period, the rationale for decentralization and further, the urge for administrative devolution with a view to secure integrated development of our nation led to reaffirmed and strengthen the panchayat system. Thus, during the course of fifty decades panchayat has undergone several structural and functional reformation and amendments to make this institution more work efficient through ensuring people's participation in the development process and in nation building as a whole. With the 73rd amendment three-tier system of panchayat was setup. It has been an instrumental in transforming socio-economic and political aspects at the base level. The panchayats system is in operation throughout India except Sixth Schedule areas. In BTAD panchayat cease to operate; in lieu VCDC works in a manner of village panchayat and it is entrusted with the similar functions to carry out planning and execution of various developmental schemes. Since, it is

simply been stated to have functions in a manner of Village Panchayats; in this light, it may entertain one that VCDC enjoys similar powers and functions as entrusted to Village Panchayat. However, the enquiry into it has unfolded several limitations in relation to revenue collection, financial matter, and matters relating to sanctioning authority or approval. Although, VCDC over the decade has been exercising the development planning, implementing and executing various development schemes under MGNREGA, IAY, PMGSY and other poverty alleviation schemes at village level yet, the efforts of VCDC are often debated, doubted, and many a time discredited. Despite of frequent allegations of corruption, mismanagement and wastage of funds and resources of developmental schemes; favoritism and nepotism in selection of beneficiaries for various poverty alleviation measures under IAY, MGNREGA, and other public distributions the achievements of VCDC in the implementation and convergence of these schemes and their contribution in the field of rural development as a whole cannot be overlooked. Again, without considering both pros and cons of VCDC it may be unfair to leap into conclusion just on the basis of deficit figures of achievement in rural development. Since, the infrastructure like rural road, culvert, medical sub-centre, maintenance and development of community assets has seen improved in recent years. Though, the socio-economic sector has not taken a rapid progress in the rural areas; however, in reality VCDC can do very little with the weak authority and in sufficient funds. The non-commission of VCDC to generate revenue of its own makes it financially non viable in nature. The financially non viable nature makes VCDC too much dependent solely on the allocation of Central and State government grants means for various schemes and sometimes on

mercy of Council Government if it receives funds for functioning of developmental work at villages. In simple term VCDC exercised very limited autonomy and the funds it receives is somewhat very limited to bring rapid socio-economic progress in the villages. BTAD had experienced political disturbances from time to time especially the communal tension and minor violence during elections. In addition the differences over party basis and communal line among the people have also profoundly affected in the political participation of the people. The experience of political turmoil in the past decades ought to have created apprehension among common people to take active participation in political affairs of BTAD in general and VCDC in particular. However, in recent years with the restoration of normalcy the political participation of people were seen gradually increasing especially during the last Council election and both in Central and State elections as well. In this connection, VCDC though has failed to assume fully satisfactory role, rather it has been playing somewhat a convincing role in mobilizing the people politically at base. Considering both limitation and responsibilities of VCDC it is quite vague to make a precise claim that VCDC is a failed local government mechanism in attaining goals of Rural Development. Moreover, since it has achieved a modest success too in some fields. VCDC has just completed over a decade of its existence since its inception. It is too early to judge the achievements and failures of VCDC. Like two sides of the same coin VCDC undoubtedly has both positive and negative sides. Nevertheless, in the long run the strains and deficits in VCDC need an urgent think-tank for its reformation so as to make it more effective institution to ensure productive results in village development.