

CHAPTER-1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Study

Rural Development in common parlance means development of rural areas. But in modern times it is very difficult to define rural development as its connotation has moved too much from its basic meaning of 'development of rural areas' to 'integrated rural development' to the present form of 'sustainable rural development'.¹ The term 'rural' denotes a non-urban style of life, characterized by agriculture based occupational structure and close-knit society and settlement pattern. According to the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences, the term 'rural' is broadly referred to the area(s) where people are usually engaged in field activities involving production of food, fiber, ores and raw materials. On the other hand 'development' is a process of gradual growth of advancement through progressive changes.

Rural development is a complex phenomenon covering a wide spectrum of activities meant to ameliorate the condition of people especially the poor people living in rural areas. It is a basis of social justice and economic equality and removal of poverty. As per the rural development Sector Policy Paper (1975) of the World Bank, the term rural development is "a strategy design to improve the economic and social condition of a specific group of people - the rural poor. It involves extending the benefits of development to the poorest among those who seek a livelihood in rural areas – the group includes small scale farmers, tenants and landless". James H. Copp has defined rural development as "a process through collective efforts, aimed at improving the wellbeing and self-realization of people living outside the urbanized areas". He further extends that the ultimate target of rural development is people and

¹Harendra Singha. 'Bureaucracy Rural Development of Mizoram. Lakshmi Publication 2006. pp.-169-173.

not infrastructure and according to him one of the objectives of rural development should be to ‘widen people’s range of choices’².

Thus rural development can be defined as strategy to improve the socio- economic, cultural and political conditions of the rural people particularly the poor living in rural areas. It also implies involvement of voluntary organizations, rural development functionaries and institutions and strategic interventions to help the rural community.

In India, where about 72% of the population lives in rural areas, the development and progress of the country lie in the development of the villages. Hence, reduction of incidents and severity of poverty have consistently headed the development agenda of all successive government, both central and states. Numerous schemes and programmes have been devised and implemented often with fanfare. Massive money has been pumped in and the ministries related to rural development have reportedly spending huge amount of money annually for poverty alleviation programmes alone. Yet, rural poverty seems to be persisting and indomitable as ever.

Soon after independence, the Community Development Programme initiated in 1952 and National Extension Service in 1953 and the setting up of the panchayati Raj Institutions later were the significant measure undertaken by the Govt. of India. These were significant efforts indeed for coordinated rural development to achieve economic growth and self-sustained developments, to generate employment, to bring equity in the level of development, to increase the standard of living of the rural poor and to develop community participation in the process of rural development.

Various approaches and strategies for rural development were initiated such as multi-purpose approach, minimum package and area development approach, target group approach, employment oriented approach, and Integrated Rural Development Approach. Realizing the importance of people’s participation in the process, Panchayati Raj Institution as an agency of rural development has been introduced in 1959. The Constitution (73rd Amendment) Act of 1992, further added a new dimension

²Ibid. p.-170.Op cite.

and vigour in the process of rural development by bringing in a constitutional provision for what is commonly known as democratic decentralization.³

But even after the introduction and strengthening of Panchayats the main functionaries and unit area of operation -- the Block Development Officer (BDO), the 'block' and 'block level functionaries' introduced during Community Development days, largely remained the same. The panchayats wherever they are available were and are often advised and guided by these functionaries in their participation in rural development activities. But, in non-panchayat areas like Meghalaya for reasons of convenience and accessibility rural development administration continued to be the main responsibility of the Block Development Officer assisted by number subordinate officers specialized and trained to motivate and assist the rural people. In absence of any popularly elected body in the village level the BDO and his team continued to look after all aspects of rural development. The role of BDOs became crucial for the rural development endeavors in Meghalaya.

In Meghalaya, the Community Development Programme was started in 1953. But the state remained outside the panchayati raj system or any other popularly elected body in the rural areas as it was under the sixth schedule of the constitution. The traditional local self-government bodies like the Village Councils or the head of the village which fall within the purview of the Sixth Scheduled of the Constitution were neither equipped to deal with the modern developmental needs of rural development nor strengthened like the panchayats in other areas of the country. With the introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions in almost all other states of India rural development programmes were/are initiated or undertaken and implemented by Panchayati Raj Institutions, at least to certain extent. It has become, more pronounced after the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act which has not only accorded a constitutional status to the panchayats but also added real teeth to them by transferring 29 subjects under the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution and ensuring availability of funds. The BDOs role was reduced to a great extent to that of a guide or a

³Ibid. pp.169-173.

facilitator. But the Act was not made applicable to Meghalaya. Article 243M (2) (a) says that “nothing in this Part shall apply to the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram”. Thus in case of Meghalaya, in absence of panchayats or similar statutory bodies and its exemption from the purview of the 73rd Amendment Act, the onus of the initiation and implementation of the rural development plans, programmes and schemes fell mainly on the shoulders of the Block Development officer and his team. So the role of the Block Development Officers in the rural development of Meghalaya is very crucial. The success or failure of rural development activities depends on his perception, performance and capabilities.

Meghalaya is located in the northeastern part of India. It is divided into eleven districts – East Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills, South West Khasi Hills, Ribhoi, East Jaintia Hills, West Jaintia Hills, East Garo Hills, West Garo Hills, North Garo Hills, South Garo Hills, and South – West Garo Hills. Geographically they are distributed into Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills and Garo Hills region. The state is inhabited by several tribes of which the Khasis, the Garos and the Jaintias are the three major tribes. The traditional self-governing system of these tribes is not similar and is not at the same level of development. Hence the functioning of the BDOs may also differ to some extent in different districts. Never the less a study of the role of the BDO in a selected district is likely to give a general understanding of the functioning of BDOs in the entire state as the BDOs are required to perform wide ranging activities covering all aspects of development.

1.1.1 Significance of the Study

In Meghalaya, the Community Development Programme was started in 1953. But the state remained outside the panchayati raj system or any other popularly elected body in the rural areas as it was under the sixth schedule of the constitution. The traditional local self-government bodies like the Village Councils or the head of the village which fall within the purview of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution were neither equipped to deal with the modern developmental needs of rural development nor strengthened like the panchayats in other areas of the country. With the

introduction of Panchayati Raj Institutions in almost all other states of India rural development programmes were/are initiated or undertaken and implemented by Panchayati Raj Institutions, at least to certain extent. It has become, more pronounced after the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act which has not only accorded a constitutional status to the panchayats but also added real teeth to them by transferring 29 subjects under the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution and ensuring availability of funds. The BDOs role was reduced to a great extent to that of a guide or a facilitator. But the Act was not made applicable to Meghalaya. Article 243M (2) (a) says that “nothing in this Part shall apply to the states of Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram”. Thus in case of Meghalaya, in absence of panchayats or similar statutory bodies and its exemption from the purview of the 73rd Amendment Act, the onus of the initiation and implementation of the rural development plans, programmes and schemes fell mainly on the shoulders of the Block Development officer and his team. So the role of the Block Development Officers in the rural development of Meghalaya is very crucial. The success or failure of rural development activities depends on his perception, performance and capabilities.

1.1.2 Statement of the Problem

The rural development scenario in Meghalaya presents a completely different picture than the rest of the country. There is no Panchayat or any other statutory elective body in the rural areas except the Autonomous District Councils at the District or tribe level. Further while in the rest of the country there is continuous effort at developing newer and newer strategy and agencies of rural development leading to wider range of democratic decentralization, in Meghalaya the status of rural development strategy, more or less remained the same since independence. In absence of a modern representative body at rural level or any serious attempt to modernize the traditional village level bodies to meet the contemporary needs of development in the rural areas, the Block Development Officers are and remained the most important functionary of rural development activities in the state. It is therefore necessary that

their role in rural development be studied in depth, assessed and understood in its proper perspective.⁴

The BDO as a multipurpose functionary is expected to be more prompt, efficient, objective, and most importantly to be capable of motivating the rural poor. He is a ubiquitous figure today, especially in the context of rural development in non-panchayat areas like Meghalaya.

In spite of the fact that the District Council has been functioning for long, the area still remains very backward. There is not enough co-ordination between the District Council and the State Rural development functionaries in the region. A certain degree of co-ordination among the two is important to avoid duplication of work. A focused and co-coordinated effort is necessary for the improvement of agriculture and allied sector, village industry, and horticulture. In the present scheme of things it is the Block Development Officer who is to ensure this co-ordination between the various implementing agencies at the rural level.

Although more than six decades have passed since the introduction of Community Development, about 40% of rural population is still living in below poverty line. It is high time now to make a field survey of rural development activities, evaluation of performance and find out some mechanism to monitor asses the performance of the rural bureaucracy. In the Rural Development Department, at the Directorate level, all the bureaucratic personnel's have been borrowed from the various development departments. The Block level bureaucrats play a very insignificant role in the development of various sectors like agriculture, small scale industry, horticulture, fishery, education, health etc. The role of Block Development Officer as central functionary, therefore, needs to be examined and assessed if the problems and prospects of rural development in Meghalaya is to be properly understood. The Government of Meghalaya as well as the Central Government is presently concentrating on accelerated development of rural areas particularly for economic self-sufficiency, improvement of communication, eradication of rural

⁴Ibid. pp.-169-173.op cite.

poverty etc. Various programmes were implemented and some are under implementation. The success of these programmes depends upon efficient and dedicated rural bureaucracy led by the Block Development Officers. It is in this context that the present study is considered to be important. The study will be carried out by surveying the field reality and the working of the Block Development Officers in the West Garo Hills District of Meghalaya. The west Garo Hills District lies in the western part of Meghalaya. The total population of the district is 6,42,923 (Meghalaya- 29,64,007) is per 2011 census. The district has six Rural Development Blocks – Rongram, Dalu, Tikrikilla, Selsella, Dadenggre and Gambegre. It is mainly inhabited by the Garos with a homogeneous socio-political back ground throughout the district. A relatively democratic and uniformly developed traditional tribal socio-political institution the Nokma, and the village council is the indigenous political system of the people there. Besides, the village councils in the district acquired a formal status under the Village Council Rules, 1971 adopted by Garo Hills District Council. Communication in the district is moderately good and it is neither very highly exposed nor very unexposed to the outside influences. Thus the district offers a better and representative sample of the state and the non-panchayat areas of the region. Hence the West Garo Hills district is selected as the area of the field study.⁵

1.1.3 Objectives of the Study

The basic objectives of the study are:

- a) To study and asses the status of rural development in Meghalaya as a Sixth schedule and non-panchayat state.
- b) To study the relationship of the subordinate officers with the BDO and mutual relationship among themselves.
- c) To study the Socio economic background and recruitment base of the Block Development Officers and other rural bureaucracy in the state.

⁵Guidelines, Training of Rural Development Functionaries, Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi, 1998, p-1.

- d) To investigate and assess the role perception and perception of rural development of the Block level officers.
- e) To study the role of traditional self-governing institutions and their relationship with the Block staff.

1.1.4 Research Questions

In view of exploratory nature of the study and lack of enough literature dealing with the area and scope of the proposed study, it is considered appropriate that we formulate the following research questions to investigate and find answers to them:

- a) What is the present status of rural development in Meghalaya and how does it differ from the non-schedule areas having Panchayats?
- b) What is the organizational arrangement of the agencies involved in rural development activities in the state?
- c) What is the role and position of the Rural Development Officer and his team in the overall mechanism of rural government agencies in the state?
- d) What is the recruitment base and the socio-economic background of the rural bureaucrats in the state?
- e) What is the status and relationship with the officers engaged in rural development work in the state; of the traditional rural level self-governing bodies/institutions in the state?
- f) What are, if any 'the difficulties encountered by the rural bureaucracy in carrying out the rural development activities?

1.1.5 Methodology and Procedure

The methodology of the study is mainly empirical and partly reflective. It involves surveying all the six blocks in the sample district of West Garo Hills, Interviewing the Block Development Officers and other selected staff currently working in the BDO

offices. The Nokmas in selected villages in each Block and a specified number of villagers in the sample villages are also be interviewed to obtain an understanding of popular perception of rural development and the role of BDOs in it. Data for introductory chapters and background profile of the study area will be gathered from government documents and published works. Thus a combination of documentary, observational, and interview method have been adopted for the study for a clear understanding of the problem.

For the purpose of this study a BDO means the officer in charge of the Block Office, block staff means the different extension officers working in a particular Block and Nokma means the A'king Nokma of the selected village. A villager means an adult man or woman of a selected village whose name appears in the latest electoral roll of the village. The villages were randomly selected from among the list of villages in every Block and the villagers were purposively selected so as to include proportionate numbers of men and women and young and elders from the voters list of the village. The exact number of villages and the number of villagers to be selected have been decided after a preliminary survey of the selected district so that the sample becomes representative of the area.

1.1.5.1 Research Design

The methodology adopted for the study is mainly empirical and partly reflective. It involves surveying all the six blocks in the sample district of West Garo Hills, interviewing the Block Development Officers and other selected staff currently working in the BDO offices. The Nokmas in selected villages in each Block and a number of villagers in the sample villages are also interviewed to obtain an understanding of popular perception of rural development and the role of BDOs in it. Data for introductory chapters and background profile of the study area is being gathered from government documents and published works. Thus, a combination of documentary, observational, and interview method would be adopted for the study for a clear understanding of the problem under study. The investigator has employed Descriptive Survey method as the design of the study. The findings of this

investigation will clearly describe the various schemes, policies, programmes, projects of the Village Council and the development of the various Blocks in Garo Hills.

1.1.5.2 Population

For the purpose of this study a BDO means the officer in charge of the Block Office, block staff means the different extension officers working in a particular Block and Nokma means the A'king Nokma of the selected village. A villager means an adult man or woman of a selected village whose name appears in the latest electoral roll of the village. The list of the population according to the Blocks with division of the Villages can be seen in the table as attached in the following pages.

Table 1.1: Population

Sl.No	Block	Population				
		Male	Female	Total	Ministerial Staff	Field Staff
1.	Rongram	29802	28943	58745	16	17
2.	Dadenggre	20842	20753	41595	14	12
3.	Tikrikilla	29267	29121	58388	15	17
4.	Sellsella	80422	78799	159221	11	24
5.	Gambegre	13576	13193	26769	11	10
6.	Dalu	25879	25341	51220	12	22

Source of the Sample: Details of Blocks from Census 2011.

1.1.5.3 Sample

The villages are randomly selected from among the list of villages in every Block with purposive sampling technique so as to include proportionate numbers of men and women and young and elders from the voters list of the village. The exact number of villages and the number of villagers is decided after a preliminary survey of

the selected district so that the sample becomes representative of the area under the population. The list of the sample is given in the following table 2.

Table 1.2: Sample

SL.No	Block	Sample				
		Male	Female	Total	Ministerial Staff	Field Staff
1.	Rongram	29802	28943	58745	16	17
2.	Dadenggre	20842	20753	41595	14	12
3.	Tikrikilla	29267	29121	58388	15	17

Source of the Sample: Details of Blocks from Census 2011.

1.1.5.4 Tools of the Study

The main tools of the field study are two sets which are developed and structured interview schedule and questionnaire; one for the Block staff and the other for the Nokma and the villagers'. The Interview schedule is tested and found to be reliable and recommended by the subject experts in the field with research experiences. The questionnaire was prepared by the investigator and standardized with reliability and validity principles with proper item analysis and discrimination of the various items which are illustrated in the following sections:-

a) Development of the Tools

- i) Development of the Interview Schedule and Questionnaire

b) Collection of Question Items

Based on the insights and ideas explored in the phase one of the research process using qualitative methods of focus group discussion, semi-structured interview with key informant, literature review, the sample of previous studies and having consulted the experts, some questions related to the objectives of the study were formulated. The total numbers of 45 questions were collected in line with the

objectives and research questions that gave the insights on Block Development Officers and their roles in various aspects of development in Garo Hills, Meghalaya.

c) Arrangement of Question Items

The questions that were formulated were then arranged logically according to the variables in line with objectives and research questions. This was then shown to some expert to give their opinion. After having received the feedback from different persons, it was shown and having discussed with the respective supervisor some modifications were made and a total of 30 questions were selected for further study. The first draft of the Interview schedule and questionnaire was then developed based on the selected question items as recommended by the experts and the concerned supervisor.

d) Pilot Study

The constructed and modified interview schedule cum questionnaire was then tried out by the investigator on some randomly selected people from different blocks of the West Garo Hills, Meghalaya. And, further modifications were made taking into consideration of the practical suggestions as given by the respondents during the field visits at various development blocks.

1.1.5.5 Procedure for Data Collection

Data for the study is mainly collected from the field survey of Three Blocks and 5 selected members from 5 villages within these blocks. Data is also collected from available government files and reports and Autonomous District Councils and Village councils. Both published and unpublished works are also used as sources of secondary data, wherever available. Information is also collected from the leading local intellectuals and knowledgeable villagers through self developed questionnaire and formal and informal discussions. Data so collected is supplemented by the field notes maintained by the investigator based on his field observation during the field visit.

1.1. 5.6 Analysis of Data

For analyzing the data the tables, figures are converted into percentages by simple calculations and simple statistical measures like frequency and percentages. The analysis of the data is given in the Chapters included in the various sections of this present study which can be seen in the following pages.

1.1.5.7 Organization of the study

The study is organized into the following chapters:

Chapter I: Introduction

Part I – This part of the study is presenting the plan of the study deals with definition and conceptual issues related to the study.

Part II – Meghalaya and West Garo Hills District: A profile. This chapter presents a brief over view of historical, social, political, economic and geographical background of the study area.

Chapter II – Status of Rural Development in Meghalaya. This chapter discusses the status of rural development in Meghalaya and West Garo Hills District since independence including the role of Autonomous District Council

Chapter III: This Chapter deals with the traditional rural self-governing institutions - the Nokma and the village councils: their role in Rural Development in respect of planning, implementation and popular participation.)

Chapter IV: 73rd Amendment Act and its implications in Sixth schedule Areas. This chapter deals with provisions of and benefits extended by the 73rd Amendment of the Constitution for rural development sector and its non-applicability in Meghalaya.

Chapter V: Role of Block Development Officers and his team in Rural Development in Meghalaya. This Chapter examines the recruitment base, socio-economic background, perception of rural development besides the achievements and

performance of the BDO and his team. The chapter also discusses the relation between the BDO and his staff as well as his ability to gain support from the traditional leaders and the villagers in his effort.

Chapter VI: Problems and difficulties encountered by the BDO. In performance of his duties. This chapter presents the problems and difficulties of the BDOs and his team identified during the course of the study.

Chapter VII: Conclusion. The chapter deals with the overall findings of the study.

1.2 Review of Related Literatures

Although rural Development is one of the frequently researched areas in India there are very few work dealing with rural development in Non-Panchayat areas in contemporary India. It is less so when it comes to the study of the role of rural bureaucracy in the scheduled areas of North-Eastern part of India. However there are certain works which address themselves to the problems of rural development in general in the Country. There are also some works dealing with the rural areas of Meghalaya which touch upon the problems of rural development.

Alagh (2015), in his research article entitled “Panchayat Raj and planning in India” based on the functioning of the new decentralized system has been examined with three case studies concerning rural roads planning and their implementation. The article has divided into three parts. The article pointed out that it is a challenger of making this new phase of commitment through existing political leadership, bureaucracy and the people themselves. Therefore, strong leadership and political could be the necessary conditions for facing the challenge the local government to become effective instruments of social and economic development of rural areas.

Sarup (1969), in his research paper entitled “Panchayat Raj and local development”, pointed out that, the climate at present cannot be favorable to the assignment of a more dynamic rule of Panchayat Raj institutions in the planning or

implementation of development programmes. Because people fail to find any positive answers of -(A) Have the PRI mobilised local resources on a significant scale ? (B) Have PRI resulted in reducing waste of public resources? (C) Have they cut down delays or enhance the efficiency and integrity of the administration? (D) Has the process of planning becomes more realistic and more in tune with local potentialities, priorities and aspirations?

Babu (2009), in the research paper entitled “Fiscal Empowerment of Panchayats in India, “focused on the review of panchayat financial position in India, has presented the political structure and the number of governments in India in chart. The main findings are the Panchayats have little fiscal autonomy and the locally raised revenue are negligible. Fund flow from higher-level governments is very low and lack of principles. The transfers are made at the convenience and mercy of such governments.

Dinesh and Nayak (2005), in their joint task entitled “Gram Sabha and ward Sabha in rural development a review of Karnataka experience”, have stressed that, the biggest strength is in the Gram Sabha, for effective participation of the local people in the rural development. Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act 1993 is far more comprehensive than those found in 1983 Act. They explain the importance, powers, functions, and failure of Gram Sabha, ward sabha in Karnataka, and suggest for efficient rural development. The beneficiary selection in the gram sabha is not justifiable by the people.

Dutta (1989), in his book entitled “Village Panchayats in India “A case study of Assam has examined the working of Gaon Panchayats in Assam, during the period 1974 – 78 and also examine what type of leadership is actually emerging in the Gaon Panchayats of Assam. Moreover Panchayats leader’s rule in the decision making process and their place in the politics of linkage have been also covered in their study. The study has examined the role of Panchayat leadership in realizing the objectives of the Assam Panchayati Raj Act of 1972 with specific reference to democratic decentralization, politicization, modernization, decision making and political linkage.

Ghosh and Maji (2004), said that creation of Panchayati Raj in 1959 was an innovative and as a revolutionary. Panchayati Raj Institutions got constitutional status. They find the problems of Panchayati Raj system in West Bengal. Panchayats gets the huge amount of 'advance' account year after year without producing the certificate of utilization of money. Panchayat bodies expend money of one head on another without the permission. A strategy based on progressive elimination of injustice and inadequacies prevalent in the socio economic system with the prime objective of achieving better quality of life for rural people. The Author explained some important central schemes and their objectives such as SGSY, RSD, IAY, JGSY, and NSAP.

Harendra Sinha studied 'The Role of Block Development Officer in the Rural Development of Mizoram. In which he discusses among other things, the recruitment, training and the functions of the Block Development Officers in Mizoram, relationship among the officers associated with rural development and the public opinion about them in the state.

Sangma (1981), in his book, "History and Culture of the Garos", presented a comprehensive picture of the socio- political life of the Garos a major tribe of Meghalaya. The Nokma system of the Garos and their role in village governance is elaborately discussed in the book. But since the book was published much before the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act which rejuvenated the system of rural governance and rural development throughout the country and which directly or indirectly influenced the rural governance system and rural development practices, even in the areas kept outside the purview of the Act, the issues generated are as similar to Panchayati Raj system.

Bhatnagar (1976), in his book, 'Rural Local Government in India', discussed the status of Rural Government in India in general. But he didn't pay attention to the tatus of rural development in Non- Panchayat areas in India or in a Sixth Scheduled area.

Chamber (1980), in his study presented only a general study of rural development in India and examined the problems and prospects of rural development in the country. But he does not make any reference to the role of rural bureaucracy in rural development but there are certain evidences regarding the Panchayati Raj System at grassroots level.

Hooja (1987), in his book administrative interventions in Rural Development studied the role of bureaucrats in rural development in general, in areas where Panchayati Raj is functioning. He studied the role of rural bureaucrats in non-panchayat areas with respect to powers and functions.

Inamdar (1992), studied development administration in general in India, but does not touch upon the problems of rural development in scheduled areas but there are certain glimpses over Panchayati Raj system and its functions in village Panchayats.

Kothari, C. R.(1991), edited a book, “Rural Development in India, Retrospect and Prospect”, contains a number of papers dealing with theoretical and conceptual as well as strategical aspects of rural development in India. This is a useful book for understanding the process and practice of rural development in the country. While the book is helpful in understanding certain concepts and practices of Panchayats at village level functioning.

Karna (1997), in their edited book, ‘Power to People in Meghalaya’ presented as many as 14 papers on Sixth Schedule, 73rd Amendment Act, traditional political systems etc. One of them dealt with a comparative study of the Panchayati Raj and traditional Khasi Institutions. But none of them dealt with the role of Block Development Officers in rural development in Non-Panchayat areas. It had a special emphasis on village Panchayats and its functionaries for grassroots administration.

Gassah (1997), in his detailed study of the working of the Autonomous District Councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura in the region confined his focus mainly on Sixth Schedule and related problems from Panchayati

Raj Institutions. It does not contain any discussion on rural development or role of rural bureaucracy in rural development.

Chattapadhya (1985), in his edited book, 'Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya' mainly confined to the study of socio- religious and socio-political institutions of the tribes of Meghalaya. The book while being useful for the back ground study of the rural areas and traditional village councils found among the tribes of Meghalaya throws much light on the status and practices of rural development in Panchayat areas in village level with respect to various functions and responsibilities.

Haloi (2006), in his study, 'Village Council in Nagaland' presents "The Act" allowing customary laws of the villages for the constitution as well as setting the compositional structure has earned a special distinction in the process of promotion of democratic organization in the country at the village level which show some elements of Village Panchayats.

Talukdar (1987), in his book "Political Transition in the Grassroots in Tribal India", described about the traditional village council, the Dying Ering Committee, Panchayati Raj and its impact especially in the organization of Village Development Board.

Markandan (1986), in his study reported Village Planning Committee: Origin and Evaluation and recorded the organization and the functioning of Village Planning Committee in the 30 service village of GRJ, Gandhigram, from 1980 to 1986 and explained the method of preparing village development project by the people and the quadrangular model of appraising them. It recommends similar planning committees at the block and at the district levels in line with village Panchayats.

Das (1985), in his work, said that the Naga village is something like a protective shell, where they can lead a life based on their own Cultural values. A village to them is a breathing space that has to be nurtured at any cost.

Bhatnagar (1976), in his book, 'Rural Local Government in India' discussed the status of Rural Government in India in general. But he does not pay attention to the status of rural development in Non- Panchayat areas in India or in a Sixth Scheduled area.

Robert (1980), presented a study of the status of rural development in India and examined the problems and prospects of rural development in the country. But he does not make any reference to the role of rural bureaucracy in rural development.

Deogaokar discussed rural development administration in India as whole Without paying attention to Sixth schedule areas, or the role Block Development Officers in particular.

Hooja (1987), in his book administrative interventions in Rural Development studies the role of bureaucrats in rural development in general, in areas where panchayats exists. He made some references to the role of rural bureaucrats in non-panchayat areas.

Karna, et al. (1997), in their work presented as many as 14 papers on Sixth Schedule, 73rd Amendment Act, traditional political systems etc. One of them dealt with a comparative study of the Panchayat raj and traditional Khasi Institutions. But none of them dealt with the role of Block Development Officers in rural development in non-panchayat areas.

Gassah (1997), presented a detailed study of the working of the Autonomous District Councils in Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura in his book (edited), Autonomous District Councils. While the book or its contributors provide a detailed study of the Autonomous District Councils in the region the studies confine their focus mainly on Sixth Schedule and related problems. It does not contain any discussion on rural development or role of rural bureaucracy in rural development.

Chattapadhyas (1985), in his edited book, Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya contains as many as 27 papers contributed by 24 authors many of them being eminent

scholars in the field. The book mainly confines itself to the study of socio- religious and socio-political institutions of the tribes of Meghalaya. The book while being useful for the back ground study of the rural areas and traditional village councils found among the tribes of Meghalaya does not throw much light on the status and practices of rural development.

Sangma (1981), in his book, 'History and Culture of the Garos' presented a comprehensive picture of the socio-political life of the Garos a major tribe of Meghalaya. It devoted one independent chapter each to the Garo village Council system and Garo political systems. The Nokma system of the Garos and their role in village governance is elaborated and discussed in detailed. But since the book was published much before the passage of the 73rd Amendment Act which rejuvenated the system of rural governance and rural development throughout the country and which directly or indirectly influenced the rural governance system and rural development practices.

Bath, in the unpublished Ph. D. thesis 'Electoral Politics in Arunachal Pradesh,' presented among other things a study of interaction between the modern electoral political process and the traditional tribal socio-political practices in Arunachal Pradesh. The study was carried out in Arunachal Pradesh which is although a hills tribal state of Northeast is not a non-panchayat state. And therefore, is not very relevant to the present problem.

Sinha (2010), in his study of the role of Block Development Officers in rural development of Mizoram discussed among other things, the recruitment, training and the functions of the Block Development Officers in Mizoram, relationship among the officers associated with rural development and the public opinion about them in the state. However, while Mizoram and Meghalaya are similarly placed in so far as Sixth Schedule and rural development strategies are concerned, Meghalaya presented a different situation in so far as the existence of traditional village institutions and their role in rural development is concerned. Hence, the findings of Harendra Sinha in the case of Mizoram may not be applicable in case of Meghalaya.

Elwin (1957), in his book “A philosophy for NEFA” has mentioned about Adis system of tribal administration in the village areas which has given better administration.

Modi (2003), in his research findings ‘’Indigenous’’ System of Governance in the tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh’’ has explained the various indigenous system of governance of tribal society in Arunachal Pradesh including tribal society in Arunachal Pradesh including tribal governance system of the Adis.

Swain (2008), in his “Local Self Government in India with reference to Arunachal Pradesh,” has identified the major traditional village council systems of Arunachal Pradesh; the democratic, the theocratic and the chieftaincy systems.

Gogoi (2014), in his book “Sociology” has mentioned about the administrative system of village council.

Parry (1932), in his book “The Lakhers” has mentioned about the administrative system of village council.

Dayalm (1982), studied the Schemes for Rural Development: and presented a list of 55 development schemes operated by nine Ministries and Departments in India, providing details like operating Ministry, name of the scheme, facility offered, and channel for flow of funds. It also highlights projects operating exclusively for various target groups like women, children, youth and artisans, along with their orientation. This book is very useful for administrators, planners, trainers and panchayat functionaries as a ready reference.

Markandan (1986), made a study on Village Planning Committee: Origin and Evolution of the organization and the functioning of Village Planning Committees in the 30 service villages of GRJ, Gandhigram, from 1980 to 1986 and explained the method of preparing village development projects by the people and the quadrangular model of appraising them. It recommended similar planning committees at the block and at the district levels.

UNAPDI (1986), in the study, *Local Level Planning and Rural Development: An Alternative Strategy*”, provided a strategy for local level planning suitable for third world countries. It is based on the field experience of its member countries. It suggests ways and means of promoting participatory planning and implementation of development plans.

Prasad (1988), in his study, ‘*Planning at the Grassroots: An in depth analysis of the issues in grassroots level planning*’, evaluated the recent Indian experience in MLP in terms of its methodological and organizational aspects, with suitable suggestions for improvement.

Aram (1989), in the study, ‘*Micro Planning at Village Level*’, reported the genesis, organization and functioning of the Village Planning Committee in two service villages of GRJ, Gandhigram. The author mentioned the achievement of the Village Planning Committees in the 30 service villages of GRI.

Pandey (1990), in the work, *Local Level Planning and Rural Development* addressed the issues involved in people-oriented development planning, explored the conceptual and operational problems of local level planning strategy, and, provides some suggestions for effective local level planning and implementation of various rural development programmes.

Jain and Thiagarajan (1990), in the *Kimdrakudi Model study of Development Through Village Level Planning A Case Study*, presented an account of the origin, growth, powers' and functions of the Village Planning Forums functioning in Kundrakudi villages, Tamilnadu, along with the annual plans and the method of framing and executing development plans by these organizations, with active people's participation in the process.

NIRD Hyderabad (1991), in the research work on ‘*Decentralized Development: A Study of Village Development Boards in Nagaland*’, reports that the evolution, composition, powers, functions, financial resource, fund management, planning process and model schemes of the Village Development Boards, which occupy the position and exercise the powers of PR Institutions in the State of Nagaland. It avers that rural people should be organized into viable Communities so

that they are able to participate effectively in the process of planning and implementation of projects meant for their own development.

Guijt and Scoones (1991), in the edited work, 'Rapid Rural Appraisal for Local Level Planning, Wollo Province, Ethiopia' edited reported a field based training experience in the application of RRA methods for local level planning in Ethiopia. It provides a practical account of the use of RRA tools for systematic data collection and village development planning and for involving the community in planning and implementation.

Markandan (1991), in his research, "A Micro Model for Developmental Planning and Implementation of Programmes with Special Reference to the Villages of Reddiar chatrani Union in Anna District, Tamilnadu" concluded that an empirical model evolved out of action research conducted in six villages during 1987-1990.

Maithani (1997), in the edited work 'Local Self-Government System in North-East India: An Appraisal', undertaken in the 7 states of North-Eastern India and Sikkim. It offered an over view of the various semi-autonomous and self-managed indigenous local institutions at different levels, along with their formation, powers, Functions and roles in planning and development. It also presents the strengths and the weaknesses of Village Councils and the cases of successful functioning Village Councils and Village Development Boards in Nagaland and other North-Eastern States.

Deogaokar in his research, '*Administration for rural development in India*', discussed Rural development administration in India as a whole. But he does not pay any attention to District Administration as such.

Inamdar, in his book development Administration in India too discussed problems of development Administration in general but no detail discussion on District administration as such carried out to give some glimpse of the facts.

Bhatnagar in his book, '*Rural Local Government In India*' discussed the status of rural government in India but it does not provide any detail discussion on District Administration and its functions for Rural Development.

Khan in his book, *“District Administration in India”*, stated that ‘DISTRICT’ or ‘JANAPADA’ has been the pivotal unit of administration in India since ancient times. In the present context ‘DISTRICT’ is more vital important organ of administration. The office of District Collector variously known as District Magistrate, Deputy Commissioner and District Officer is one and performs all the duties of the concerned district.

Khera (1964), in the *“Survey of the history of Indian administration”*, shows that in early stages of evolution a single authority, represented by the collector/ Deputy Commissioner, had direct charge of all these functions of government at the district level. In course of time, local self-governing institutions were introduced and the technical departments were set up. So instead of unity of command there develop multiplicity of command. After the enforcement of Government of India Act, 1919 and later, the Government of India Act, 1953 this change became more and more marked. That is why the Central administration Reform Commission is of the opinion that the regulatory tasks are to be performed by the collector and the development tasks are to be left in charge of Panchayati Raj Institution.

Avasthi & Avasthi (2013), reported in *Indian Administration* that the British saw no reason to depart from the age-old pattern of area administration and gave pride of place to district as the basic unit of administration. Thus, under the British rule, the district became virtually a sort of sub-capital both in administrative and political sense. Independent India too has kept up the tradition and the district continues to retain its position as the pivot of the structure of administration and government in the state. It is at this level that the policies of the government are translated into practice and the problem of local people are studied and communicated to the state government. It is in the district that the big and complex machine of government is in operation and it is by its accomplishments at this vital Centre that we can measure the extend of success of government policies, plans, and programmes. It may be truly said that the district is the unit of administration with which almost every citizen comes into contact.

Brass in the work, "*The politics of India since Independence*" wrote: "Gandhian desires for the dismantling of the colonial bureaucratic structure, the transformation of Indian National Congress into an organization for constructive work in the countryside, and the creation of a decentralization from of local self-government down to village level were not taken seriously by the constituent Assembly of India. Moreover, the entire system of British District Administration, which both concerned authority at the district level and provided for very little participation by representative of the people, was retained virtually intact, particularly the central importance of District of the District and the District courts and police."

Taradatt (2002), in the 'Development Administration in an Indian State' a guide book for the BDO, represented the BDO as a new culture of administration expected to plan and coordinate the rural development efforts and they are one of the most important links between the people and the Government. The book focused on the development functionaries to the duties and responsibilities of development administration and the block development administration in Orissa state is taken as a basis.

Choudhuri (1978), in the research work, 'New Partnership in Rural Development' observed that Block development administration along with other extension agencies; the VLWs are responsible for the multi-purpose functions and are designated as subject matter specialist. It also explained that in the overall rural development administration in India, the VLWs are under the direct supervision of the BDOs, who guides and control the VLWs in discharging their multi-purpose functions.

Kuldeep (1972), in his work, 'Bureaucratic Response to Development' opined that the BDO who is the base of hierarchy is surely a vital link in the administrative system. The author also opined that BDO is the cutting-edge of the government interaction with the citizen and moulds and influences public attitude towards development in a significant way.

Dubhashi (1970), in the work, 'Rural Development Administration in India' analysed the various aspects of the changing pattern of rural development administration in India during the last ten years. The book stresses the dual role of BDO, training followed up and the foundation of extension, cooperation and community development. This is indeed a reappraisal of the entire rural development administration in India.

Deogaonkar (1980), in his work, 'Administration for Rural Development in India', suggested the need of training of the VLWs and certain pre conditions for the training imparted to them. The book also elaborated on the analyses of the recruitment policy of VLWs in India and abroad.

Roy (1976), in his research, 'Organizational Aspects of Rural Development' stressed the organizational process at the Block level administration of the two Blocks in the state of Karnataka. The author makes a critical observation of the working structure of the Block level rural development administration in relation to the effective attainment of goals, priorities and targets of rural development programmes.

Maheswary (1985), in the work, 'Rural Development in India' observed that the VLWs stand at the tail end of the community development hierarchy. The VLWs are multi-purpose worker required to attend all aspects of development. He met the villagers to persuade them to adopt new methods and practices in the areas they are living in. The VLWs work for all the extension personnel, but under the administrative control of Block Development Officer.

Chattopadhyaya (1988), in his journal, *The Jaintias*", has mentioned about the socio-political Institution of Jaintia Hills Districts in Meghalaya.

Rana (1989), in his book, "*The people of Meghalaya*", mentioned about the people of Meghalaya and their religious cultural life.

Joshi (2004), in his book "*Meghalaya past and present*", mentioned about the old perspective as well a panoramic and authenticity of modern Meghalaya.

Laxmikanth, et. al (2004), in the book, “*Public Administration*”, Provided a comprehensive study on the administrative structure and functions relating to Local Self Government in rural areas.

Bakshi, et al, (2013), in their book, “*The Constitution of India*”, has mentioned various constitutional provisions relating to the rural local bodies. It has also mentioned about the various Articles relating to Panchayats and Municipalities.

Raj (2014), in his book, “*Role of Local Self Government in promoting Social Harmony*”, has given the concept of social harmony and local self government. He also stated that the Local Self Government has multidimensional and multifaceted role to play in the development process and in promoting social harmony.

Syiem (2015), in his article, “*The Dorbar Shnong as Institutions of Local Self Government*”, had mentioned about the current controversy relating to the powers and functions of the Rangbah Shnong (local headman) in Meghalaya.

Talukdar (1987), in his book, “*Political Transition in the Grassroots in Tribal India*” had described about the traditional village, the Daying Ering Committee, Panchayati Raj and its impact on the traditional villages.

Pegu, in his article on the Kebang of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh: A Study of its Democratic Aspects had explained that the Kebang of the Adis of Arunachal Pradesh is the traditional village council from time immemorial. It may be said that the Adi migrated from Tibet in 7th century and as a semi-nomadic peoples, so joined in the Abor Hill from a superior and more civilized power has evolved their own administrative institutions required for maintaining village society.

Danggen (2003), in his book, “*The Kebang: a unique indigenous Political Institutions of the Adis*”, had mentioned about history and mythodological background of Kebang system, its contemporary practice on the Bogum Bokang Kebang, the highest political institutions of the Adi society.

Talukdar (1994), in his workshop on traditional self-governing institutions has mentioned the system of Kebang as the best example of democratic setup of traditional village councils of Arunachal Pradesh.

Modi (2003), in his research findings, “Indigenous System of Governance in the tribal society of Arunachal Pradesh” had explained the various Indigenous system of Governance of tribal society in Arunachal Pradesh including tribal governance.

Nyori (1993), in his work, “History and Culture of the Adi’s had discussed about the history and culture of the Adi Tribe of Arunachal Pradesh”.

The Six Schedule of the Constitution of India gave a detailed direction and guidance in the governance of the tribal areas including Arunachal Pradesh. The schedule included various provisions relating to the representation of people in the Regional and District Councils, this power and duties including making of laws etc.

Das (2005), in his book, ‘Life style on India Tribes ‘had mentioned that Kebang the system of the three- tier Kebang obtaining in the Adi society is a unique example of direct democracy in the truest sense of the term and is remarkably similar to the Panchayat system.

Haloi (2006), organised at village level a long tradition of continuity and authority of control and management touching nearly all spheres of rural life.

Haloi (2006), revealed, ‘Village Council in Nagaland is unique in the country. The Act allowing customary laws of the villages for the constitution as well as setting the compositional structure has earned a special distinction in the process of promotion of democratic organization in the country at the village level.’

Smith (1926), in his study said that village government since time immemorial was the only government known to them and an accepted institution with a strong sense of solidarity.

Mills (1973), in the context of Nagaland, remarked that with all the real political units of the tribe, it is the village government that governs and administers the entire people of the village.

Das (1985), in his work concluded that the “The Naga village is something like a protective shell, where they can lead a life based on their own Cultural values. A village to them is a breathing space that has to be nurtured at any cost.

Markandan (1986), in his study, ‘Village Planning Committee: Origin and Evaluation’, recorded the organization and the functioning of Village Planning Committee in the 30 service village of GRJ, Gandhigram, from 1980 to 1986 and explained the method of preparing village development project by the people and the quadrangular model of appraising them. He recommended similar planning committees at the block and at the district levels.

Planning at the grassroots (1989), by Kamta Prasad present an in depth analysis of the issued in grassroots level planning. It evaluates the resent India experience in MLP in term of its methodological and organizational aspect, with suitable suggestions for improvement.

Pandey (1990), in his study, ‘Local Level Planning and Rural Development addressed the issues involved in people-oriented development planning, and explored the conceptual and operational problems of local level planning strategy, and, provided some suggestions for effective local level planning and implementation of various rural development programmes.

Holroyed, in his observation also supported the fact that, "Each clan is ruled by its council and no important measure concerning the welfare of the clan undertaken without the consent of the elders and no operation undertaken till it has been carried out by the council”. It is clear from Holroyed's observation and other scholars that the democratic system of functioning has been practiced in the administration of the village even before the advent of the British in Naga territory. This practice is further responsible for the strong sense of unity and solidarity among the various clans.

Hutton, observed "The most important reason for forming the village elders was to learn the opinion of the community on any matter which affects the whole community..."

Pradhan and Uphoff (1999), both emphasized on the importance of local institutions in mobilizing the rural resource.

Vimal (2000), presented the problems and prospects of watershed development in India and recommended the importance of mass involvement in both water and land resource management.

Maithani and Rizwana (1991), carried out a thorough study on VDB and its functioning. They highlighted some of the lacunae in VDB and emphasized the role of VDB and that its functioning must be well coordinated with the state government officials. The study was a good piece of work as far as VDB is concern.

Ao (1993), in his study examined and analyzed emerging agrarian relation, social structures and rural leadership in the foothill villages of Nagaland. Interestingly, he has carried out his study among multi-ethnic communities. He also stressed upon the importance of people's participation in development processes based on the functions of VDBs in the state.

Bag (2001), in his book on rural transformation has studied the economic and social changes taking place in the state of Nagaland.

Saleh (1989), an economist, in his work indicated that the economic transformation taking place in the state since 1964 is due to rural and social development that are taking place in the rural areas where Block Development/village development are strongly footed.

Sahey (1989), based on his paper entitled, 'decentralization.' The Nagaland way and Nagaland villages choose progress asserted that socio-economic changes may be seen in the state. The performance of Nagaland VDB which is run purely in a

democratic and decentralized manner both in planning processes as well as in execution of the programmes has been working in its satisfactory manner.

Prasad (1988), in his study, 'Planning at the grassroots', reports an in depth analysis of the issue in grassroots level planning and evaluated the recent Indian experience in MLP in terms of its methodological and organizational aspects, with suitable suggestions for improvement.

Pandy (1990), in his study, 'Local level planning and rural development addressed the issue involved in people oriented development planning, explored the conceptual and operational problems of local level planning strategy and provided some suggestion for effective level planning and implementation of various rural development programmes.

Guijt and Scoones (1991), in their edited work, 'Rapid Rural Appraisal for Local Level Planning, Wollo Province, Ethiopia, reported a field based training experience in the application of RRA methods for local level planning in Ethiopia and provided a practical account of the users of RRA tools for systematic data collection and village development planning and for involving the community in planning and implementation.

UNAPDI, Bangkok (1986), reported in the work, 'Local Level Planning and Rural Development: An alternative strategy', and provided a strategy for local level planning suitable for third world countries. It is based on the fixed experience of its member's countries. It suggested ways and means of promoting participatory planning and implementation of development plans.

Khera (1964), in his work reported the 'basic territorial unit of administration in India is the district, and 'district administration' is the total management of public affairs with this unit.' It is at this level that the common man comes into direct contact with the administration. The difference between good and bad administration is, consequently, made and felt at this level. This district has been placed under the charge of a district officer called either Deputy Commissioner or District Collector

who acts as the eyes, ears and arms of the State Government. The district has also been the unit of administration for various other departments of the State Government.

Avasthi & Avasthi (2013), in the book 'Indian Administration,' states that "District administration is the total functioning of government in a district; that total and complex organization of the management of public affairs at work; dynamic and not static in the territory of a geographically demarcated district.....District administration includes all the agencies of government, the individual officials and functionaries, public servants....all institutions for the management of public affairs in the district, all the bodies corporate such as the Panchayats of different kinds.....all advisory bodies associated with the administration."

Avasthi & Avasthi (2013), reported in Indian Administration that the British saw no reason to depart from the age-old pattern of area administration and gave pride of place to the district as the basic unit of administration. Thus, under the British rule, the district became virtually a sort of sub-capital both in administrative and political sense. Independent India too has kept up the tradition and the district continues to retain its position as the pivot of the structure of administration and government in the states. It is at this level that the policies of the government are translated into practice and the problems of local people are studied and communicated to the state government. It is in the district that the big and complex machine of government is in operation and it is by its accomplishments at this vital centre that we can measure the extent of success of governmental policies, plans and programmes. It may be truly said that the district is the unit of administration with which almost every citizen comes into contact.

Hunter (1892), wrote about the importance of district magistrate, "The district officers, whether known as Collector-Magistrate or as Deputy Commissioner is the responsible head of his jurisdiction: Upon his energy and personal character depends ultimately the efficiency of our Indian government. His own special duties are so numerous and so various as to bewilder the outsiders, and the work of his

subordinates, European and native, largely depends upon the stimulus of his personal example. His position has been compared to that of the French prefect, but such a comparison is unjust in many ways to the Indian district officer. He is not a mere subordinate of a central bureau, who takes his colour from his chief and represents the political parties or the permanent officials of the capital. The Indian Collector is a strongly individualized worker in every department of rural well-being, with a large measure of local independence and the individual initiative” (Quoted by S.R. .Maheswari. Indian Administration, p.575). I have already noted that during the British rule the district magistrates were the most powerful persons. They were not only the spokespersons of the British government in rural and semi-rural areas, they were the real administrators. They were the pivots of district administration. They were the policy-makers and implementers of policies. The district magistrates were fiscal officers. They were collectors of taxes and in that sense they were the revenue officers. They were also development officers. In fact, a district magistrate was a single man with numerous responsibilities.

“At the district level, the Collector or the Deputy Commissioner should be the captain of the team of officers of all development departments and should be made fully responsible for securing the necessary co-ordination and co-operation in the preparation and execution of the district plans for community development”

Mehta Study Team (1957), reported the radical changes in the field of development administration. The Panchayati Raj institutions (Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat, Panchayat Samiti and Zilla Parishad) are playing crucial role in the field of development. The district magistrate or district collector plays the role of leadership. The materials for development are supplied through the district magistrate or collector.

During the last few decades both the importance and volume of work of district collector or magistrate have enormously increased and this is primarily due to the rise of centrally-sponsored schemes. Some of these schemes are: District Rural Development Agency, Integrated Child Development Programme, Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas, Assistance to people belonging to Below Poverty Line, Desert Development Programme etc. There are also state sponsored

programmes. The responsibility of implementing these welfare projects falls upon the district magistrate or collector.

Parry (1932), in his book, “The Lakhers” has mentioned about the administrative system of village council of the Mara people.

Elwin (1957), in his book, “A Philosophy for NEFA” has mentioned about Adis system of tribal administration in the village areas which has given better administration and gave some implications of village councils.

Executive Committee of Regional Council (1960), Pawi/Lakher Hnamdan (customary law of pawi/lakher) has mentioned about powers and function of Autonomous District Council where Lushai Hills district of Assam now termed as Mizo Hills.

Mathur (2007), thought that a system of regular and continuous flow of authoritative information is essential. There is room for the government to take up concurrent evaluations, more effective monitoring, time-series studies, and focused reports on critical aspects like minimum wages, muster rolls. To improve implementation, the government needs to solve problems, modify policy directives, and issue operational guidelines for the district, block and village levels.

Lai u Fachhai (1993), in his book “The Maras”(From head hunters to missionary) has described about the village headmen and lifestyle of the Mara people.

Gogoi (2014), in his book, “Sociology” has mentioned about the working and functioning of the village council.

Law Research Institute (2001), made a study on the Customary Laws of the Maras of Mizoram with special reference to their Rules and Regulations of village council which are reflection of the village development blocks.

Durkheim (1915), in his written work on authority on the primitive people is undisputed. He contended that primitive State was not tyrannical, as is supposed to be, to its subjects because they were always a body of kinship and relationship, by

clanship and age grades and that they spoke of themselves as a group where practically everybody was related, in reality or fictitiously, to everybody else. Customary laws governed and regulated these relationship and ties of fraternity which emerged thereof.

Maclver (1965), in his work, ‘ The Web of Government,’ said with conviction that in primary sense a tribe was “community organized on the basis of kinship who usually claimed to have descended from a common ancestor” and that “tribal government was characteristic feature of simple society” and “was equivalent to Primitive Government.”

Gangte (1993), in his work, said that Chieftainship is a very powerful secular institution based on kinship structure for the purpose of village administration which is the highest and independent political unit. According to Customary Laws, the office of chieftainship is hereditary passing from father to eldest son among the Thadous and to the youngest among the Lushais.

Thus, the existing literatures do not cover our knowledge of the process and practices of rural development and the role of rural democracy in its working. Though there were few glimpses of the various functions, roles, responsibilities of the village development blocks. The present study is a humble attempt to fill this gap. In the present spate of democratic decentralization the non-panchayat areas are also bound to experience certain changes in the rural development strategies and practices. The perception, practices, functioning and accountability of the rural bureaucracy and the people are bound to be influenced by the happenings outside the block, district or the state. It is the responsibility of the social scientists to investigate and find out these processes and emerging trends in these areas taking place during the post independent era specially the post 73rd Amendment Act period. The present study is a small step towards this direction. The study besides adding to our knowledge in the field of rural development and the role of rural bureaucracy is expected to provide necessary feedback to the planners and Administrators for better policies, its implementations as well as mechanism for better evaluation. Besides, it may also help scholars and future

researchers in their work by serving as a bench mark work for grassroots best practices.

1.3 Socio-Economic Profile of Study Area

The early history of the Garos is shrouded in mystery. The forefathers of the Garos allied to Koches, Chutiyas, Kacharis and Meches came from the north-west. Another tradition ascribing some support to this theory, maintains that the Garos are descended from their forefathers in Asong Tibetgori. The Garos in the Kamrup plain, recount a tradition that their forefathers came eastward from the Himalayas and reached Gondulghat where they made a brief halt, and on leaving that place, traversed to Sadiya, from where they trekked on into the north bank of Brahmaputra. After a long westward trail, they reached Amingaon. There in the north bank their life was not secure, they crossed the Bahmaputra river and came to occupy Kamakhya. They occupied it for some generations until the Koches came to invade the Garo Kingdom. From Gauhati, wave after wave of westward migration poured to the Garo outer hills, and later on penetrated the interior hills of their present abode. Probably who those crossed the hills and advanced further south to Mymensing in Bangladesh were the earliest immigrants whereas those who came later on, now confined into their present settlement at Goalpara and Kamrup, belonged to the later immigrants.⁶

If critically examined, the ancient history of Garos would seem to have been a period marked by persistent and tenacious internal warfare and many blood-feuds seem to seem to have occurred between families or villages and between neighbouring Chiefs or Nokmas.⁷

⁶Maheswari, S. R. (2005). Local Government in India. Agra: Laxmi Narayan Agarwal. p.-103

⁷Gram Vikas. Programmes at a Glance, Government of India. Ministry of Rural Development, 2001. P-13.

1.3.1 Medieval Period

With the passage of time in the medieval period, while the Garos in the hills were still divided into a number of petty Nokmaships, the plain tracts along the fringes at the foot of the hills came to be included in the many Zamindari Estates, which eventually developed into fewer but larger complexes. During the mediaeval era and the Mughal period, the more important estates bordering the Garo Hills were Karaibari, Kalimalupara, Mechpara and Habraghat in Rongpur district, Susang and Sherput in Mymensing district of Bengal and Bijini in the Eastern Duars. Early records describe the Garos as being in a state of intermittent conflict with Zamindars of these large estates.⁸

1.3.2 Modern Period

The contact between the British and the Garos started towards the close of the 18th Century after the British East India Company had secured the Diwani of Bengal from the Mughal Emperor. Consequently, all the estates bordering upon Garo Hills, which for all practical purposes had been semi-independent were brought under the control of the British.

Though political control had passed from the Mughals to the British, the latter, like Mughals, had no desire to control the Estates or their tributaries directly. The Zamindars were not disturbed in the internal management of their estates. In fact, they were entrusted, as they had been by the Mughals, with the responsibility of keeping the hill Garos in check with help of their retainers. Thus in the beginning, the intermittent conflict between the Zamindars and the Garos went on unabated until the situation deteriorated to the extent that the British were forced to take notice. This development led ultimately to the annexation of the Garo Hills in 1873. Captain Williamson was the first Deputy Commissioner of the unified district. The district was

⁸Maheswari, S. R. (2005). Local Government in India. Agra: Laxmi Narayan Agarwal. p.-103.

bifurcated into two districts viz. East Garo Hills and West Garo Hills districts in October 1979.⁹

1.3.3 Meghalaya and West Garo Hills District

Meghalaya, an agricultural state, the topographical isolation, bad communication networks, limited cultivable lands, primitive method of cultivation and insufficiency in food production is still backward. Facilities like transport, communication, irrigation, electricity and industry for development are not adequate. On consideration of above background, trained, skilled, specialized, efficient and impartial bureaucracy is required in those involved in the process of rural development.¹⁰

1.3.4 District Profile of West Garo Hills

West Garo Hills is one of the largest district of Meghalaya located in the western part of the State. The Garo Hills district was divided into two districts, viz. the West Garo Hills district and the East Garo Hills district in October 1976. The erstwhile West Garo Hills district was further divided into two administrative districts of West and South Garo Hills on June 1992. The district headquarters of West Garo Hills is Tura, which is the second largest town in the State after Shillong.¹¹

a) Area Profile

The West Garo Hills district lies on the western part of the state of Meghalaya bounded by the East Garo Hills district on the east, the South Garo Hills on the south-

⁹Ibid. p.-103.

¹⁰S. K Chattapadhyaya, S. K. (1985). Tribal Institutions of Meghalaya, (ed). Guwahati: Spectrum Publications, 1985. pp.-67-76.

¹¹Reddy, S. P.L. (2007). Peace and Development in North East India. Pathak. New Delhi: Mittal Publication. pp.- 20-40.

east, the Goalpara district of Assam on the north and north-west and Bangladesh on the south. The district is situated approximately between the latitudes $90^{\circ} 30'$ and $89^{\circ} 40' E$, and the longitudes of 26° and $25^{\circ} 20' N$.

The population is pre-dominantly inhabited by the Garos, a tribe with a matrilineal society belonging to the Bodo family of the Tibeto-Burman race tribes. Other indigenous inhabitants are the Hajongs, Rabhas, Koches, Rajbansis, Meches, Kacharis and Dalus. The district is also inhabited by Bengalis, Assamese, Nepalese, Marwaries, Biharis and people from other parts of India.

b) Topography

The West Garo Hills district is mostly hilly with plains fringing the northern, western and the south-western borders. There are three important mountain ranges in the districts of Garo Hills.

c) Tura Range

This is one of the most important mountain ranges in the West Garo Hills. The Tura range is about 50 kms. long and extends in the east-west direction from Tura to Siju in the South Garo Hills district. The mountain peaks that are located in this range are Tura Peak, Nokrek Peak, Meminram Peak, Nengminjok Peak, Chitmag Peak. The highest peak of this range is the Nokrek (1412 m.) lying 13 kms. south-east of Tura. To the west of the Tura range low hill ranges run from north to south, and to the north of the Tura range hill ranges run parallel to it, gradually increasing in height till they meet in the south.

Now the entire Tura range comes under the management of Nokrek National Park. These high ranges are strictly protected as Catchment areas right from the time of British Administration in Garo Hills. There is no human habitation in the heart of these ranges which has now become an ideal home to various flora and fauna.

d) Arbella Range :Arbella Peak is 999 metres high. It lies on the northern side of Asananggre village on the Tura Guwahati road. Most of the peaks in this mountain range fall in the East Garo Hills district.

e) Ranggira Range

This mountain range lies on the western fringe of the district and ends in Hallidayganj village. The height of this peak is 673 metres.

f) River Systems

The Tura range form watersheds in the West Garo Hills district, from which the rivers flows towards Bangladesh plains in the south and the Brahmaputra valley in the north and the west. The important rivers of the north group are the Kalu, Ringgi and the Didak. The important rivers of the southern group are the Bhogai, Dareng etc. The Tura range is also the source of the Simsang (Someswari), one of the major rivers of Meghalaya, whose valley is of the most important feature in the South Garo Hills.

g) Someswari

This is the largest and the second longest river in the whole district. The river is locally known as Simsang. It starts from Nokrek mountains and runs towards the east, passing through Rongrenggre, Williamnagar the headquarters of East Garo Hills district, Nongalbibra, Siju, Rewak and lastly Baghmara the headquarters of South Garo Hills district. The upper course of this river is not navigable due to the high number of cataracts and numerous huge stones. However the lower course has many deep pools and falls. They are Mirik, Matma, Kan´chru Suk, Jamiseng, Warisik, Bobra, Goka etc. The chief tributaries are Chibok, Rongdik, Rompa and Ringdi rivers.

h) Jinjiram

It starts from Derek village and its main tributary starts from Upot Lake. It runs towards the east connecting with Gagua river, then runs through the border of

Goalpara towards Phulbari and reaches Hallidayganj where it enters the Goalpara district. It is the longest river in the Garo Hills districts.

i) Kalu

Locally this river is called Ganol. Its sources start from Tura peak and runs towards the west through Damalgre, Garobadha and Rangapani before it enters Goalpara district. Its chief tributaries are Dilni and Rongram rivers.

j) Didak

It starts from Anogre village and runs through Garo Hills district before it enters into Goalpara district.

k) Bogai

Locally known as Bugi. Its source starts from the southern side of Nokrek mountains and runs through Dalu village and enters into Mymensingh district in Bangladesh.

l) Rongai

Starts from Arabela peak and runs through Ringgegre village and then falls into Jinjiram river. Locally known as Ringge river.

m) Dareng or Nitai

The source is on the southern side of Nokrek mountain. It runs southwards through Silkigre and enters into Bangladesh. It has many famous deep pools like Warima, Rong'ang, Bamon etc. where Bamon is the deepest. The chief tributaries are Kakija, Daji and Rompa.

n) Climate

The climate of the district is largely controlled by South-West monsoon and seasonal winds. The West Garo Hills district being relatively lower in altitude to the rest of Meghalaya, experiences a fairly high temperature for most part of the year. The average rainfall is 330 cms. of which more than two-thirds occur during the monsoon, winter being practically dry. The districts have mostly dense tropical mixed forest, and a small patch of temperate forest in the higher parts of the Tura range.

o) Transport & Communication

Tura, the headquarters of the district, is well connected by road with other places in the district as well as with the rest of the Meghalaya and Assam. Buses by Meghalaya Transport Corporation and other private transport services run regularly connecting Tura with all important places in the districts of Garo Hills and also to Shillong (323 kms), the capital of the State. Regular day and night bus services are also available from Tura to Guwahati (220 kms), the capital of Assam, which is also the nearest railhead. There are also regular bus services connecting Tura to Siliguri, a city in North Bengal. Also the place is connected to Dhubri in Assam by road and river transport. Bus and taxi services are available on shared and hire basis.

p) Infrastructure

There are 7 degree colleges in the district. There is also a Law College and a College of Teacher's Education (B.Ed College) at Tura. There are 8 higher secondary schools, around 110 secondary schools, and upper primary and primary schools in almost all the villages. There also exists a Public School and Kendriya Vidyalaya at Tura. Other than that there are vocational institutes at Tura like Regional Vocational Training Institute (RVTI) and ITI. Monfort Centre for Education is also providing education to the physically handicapped persons, which also provides training to the teachers to properly equip them to educate the physically handicapped students. At Tura, there is a campus of North Eastern Hill University. Recently a Home Science College has been set up in the District.

The district has 7 Hospitals, 14 Primary Health Centres (5 underway), 4 State Dispensaries, 5 Community Health Centres, 82 Health Sub Centres and a Nursing School. Doordarshan Kendra and All India Radio, Tura transmits programmes covering local issues, featuring local people, in the local language.

q) Socio-economic Scenario

Since independence, various schemes have been adopted by the central and local governments for economic development. The district council was created under the sixth schedule of the Constitution of India to preserve the traditional way of life of the people, to protect them from exploitation by others, and to make them leaders of their own progress. The tribal development blocks came into existence to ensure speedy development. Incentives provided for cash crops and efforts made to popularize terrace cultivation have yielded some results. The communication bottleneck, soil erosion and loss of fertility are, however, among the problems retarding prosperous economic growth.

The occupational mobility is a noticeable phenomenon. The literacy rate is on increase and the educated gentry is involved in professions other than traditional agriculture. Many are employed outside Garo Hills. Some are wealthy farmers, taking advantage of the official schemes. The multi-tier democratic political system has converted many into whole-timers in politics. The contractors constitute the wealthy class. The growth of population and markets inspired many to set themselves in business. Poultry and diary farming and bee-keeping are also practiced.

Garo Hills, the backward district of the state, needs topmost priority for all round development in all sectors of development. In the overall development of the region and success of rural developmental schemes, the key importance is the rural bureaucracy. Full-fledged staffing in all the rural development blocks and involving them effectively in all sectors of development- agriculture, small scale industry, veterinary, horticulture, fishery to generate employment for the rural poor is required. But the importance must be given in motivating the rural bureaucracy to work hard in

assisting the villagers in a difficult working condition for which the BDOs are entirely responsible.

r) Education in Meghalaya

Formal education in Meghalaya has been a recent one commencing with the formulation of a Khasi Alphabet in 1842 by Rev Thomas Jones, a Welsh missionary. Similarly for the Garo Hills, a Garo Alphabet was evolved in 1902 by American missionaries using the Roman script. Thus the Christian missionaries were the first to start modern education in the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills. With requirements for a literate society not being high in colonial times, only a few elementary schools were functioning in what is now known as Meghalaya. The first college was established in Shillong only in 1924 by the Christian Brothers of Ireland. Being a hill station blessed with bracing weather and having a strong colonial influence, several quality colleges and public schools have been established over the years. The alumni of these schools are spread all over the country and their footprints are also found all over the world. Some of them hold very distinguished positions and occupy high offices in foreign countries, as well.

The SANSKRIT word “Meghalaya” means the “Abode of clouds”. The word was adopted for naming the state, as the areas were proverbially associated with clouds and rain. True to its name, for half the year, from late April to September, rain-bearing clouds envelop the land. The hilltops are generally covered by dense but beautiful clouds making them almost inseparable and indistinguishable, clouds from a veritable part of Meghalaya befitting the poetic name of the State. She is also endowed with the world’s highest rainfall site ‘Cherrapunjee’(but now Mawsynram is wetter). Former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi inaugurated Meghalaya as the 21st State of India on January 21, 1972 at Polo Ground, Shillong. Meghalaya became a full-fledged state of Indian Union.

As of 2011, census the state has a population of 29,64,007 and is the 23rd most populous in the country. Bounded on the North and East by Assam and on the South

and West by Bangladesh, Meghalaya is spread over an area of 22,429 square kilometers and lies between 20.1°N and 26.5°N latitude and 85.49°E and 92.52°E longitude. Meghalaya covers an area of about 300 kilometers in length and about 100 kilometers in breadth. It is bounded on the North by Goalpara, Kamrup and Nowgong Districts, on the East by Karbi Anglong and North Cachar Hill districts, all of Assam, and on the South and West by Bangladesh also known as Pine city.

Shillong, The capital of Meghalaya is also known as pine city located at an altitude of 1496 metres above sea level. Shillong, which was made Assam's capital in 1874, remained so till January 1972, following the formation of Meghalaya. The capital city derives its name from the manifestation of the creator called Shyllong. Has a population of 143,007. The capital is Shillong, known as the "Scotland of the East".

About one third of the state is forested. The Meghalaya subtropical forests eco region encompasses the state; mountain forests are distinct from the lowland tropical forests to the North and South. The forests of Meghalaya are notable for their biodiversity of mammals, birds, and plants.

Though very little is known about Meghalaya's history, It is known that in the 19th century the Meghalaya has been the homeland of a number of tribes, namely the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia, each of the three tribes had their independent rule in the different territories of state. But the arrival of the Britishers in the political scenario of India changed the plight of these tribal communities.

In the 19th century, Meghalaya became a counterpart of the British Empire in India. During the British Raj, the state was annexed under the British Empire. Further in 1935, it became a part of Asom. Yet, it enjoyed a semi-independent state due to the treaty that was signed between Meghalaya and the British Crown.

Moreover, after the Partition of Bengal in 1905, Meghalaya was made a part of the new province that was called out of Bengal. 1905, the state became a part of Eastern Bengal and Asom. Again, in 1912, when the partition was reversed, it was clubbed with Asom as a single territory. The history proves that although Meghalaya

had been a part of Asom in 1947; yet it enjoyed an autonomous power within the territory of Asom. In fact, two districts of Asom were also put under the jurisdiction of Meghalaya in 1947. The history of Meghalaya is associated with the three predominant tribes inhabiting the state since centuries. The Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos are the chief inhabitants of the state of Meghalaya. According to legends the Khasis were the earliest immigrants of the state. The Khasis made their way across northern Myanmar to Assam. The Khasis symbolize the Mon-Khmer language of south-East Asia. The Khasis, Jaintias and the Garos had their own kingdom then.

The kingdom of Khasis, Jaintias and Garos came under the British administration in 19th century. In 1765 the British came to Sylhet (now in Bangladesh). Khasis used to visit Pandua, the border of Sylhet, for trade purposes. Bengal used to import limestone from the Khasi Hills. Eventually the British started trading in limestone and developed contact with the Khasis. In 1824 the Burmese invaded Cachar and the Jaintia Hills. In the same year a friendship treaty was signed between the Jaintia Rajah and the British for accepting the protection of the British. The Khasi chiefs allowed the passage of the British through their territories. After the Burmese invasion was over the British demanded a corridor through the Khasi and the Jaintia Hills to connect the Assam valley with Surma Valley.

When Meghalaya was added to Assam an uprising was started by the people for the attainment of independence from the state of Assam. Freedom fighter Tirot Singh started an uprising but his uprising was suppressed. Several treaties were signed with Khasi chiefs. In 1862 the Jaintias revolted under U Kiang Nongbah. The British eventually took control of the resources of the Khasi Hills. They suppressed the chiefs and took control of the judiciary. Meghalaya became as an independent state on 21 January 1972, when it was carved out from two districts of the state of Assam - the United Khasi, Jaintia and Garo hills. Before attaining the full statehood, Meghalaya was given a semi- autonomous status in 1970.

In 1971, the Parliament passed the North-Eastern Areas (Reorganization) Act, 1971, which conferred full statehood on the Autonomous State of Meghalaya. Meghalaya attained statehood on 21 January 1972, with a Legislative Assembly of its own. (Recognition, Act, 1971)

When Bengal was partitioned on 16 October, 1905 by Lord Curzon, Meghalaya became a part of the new province of 'Eastern Bengal and Assam'. However, when the partition was reversed in 1912, Meghalaya became a part of the province of Assam.

Meghalaya is subject to vagaries of the monsoon. The climate varies with altitude. The climate of Khasi and Jaintia Hills is uniquely pleasant and bracing. It is neither too warm in summer nor too cold in winter, but over the plains of Garo Hills, the climate is warm and humid, except in winter. The Meghalaya sky seldom remains free of clouds. The average annual rainfall is about 2600 mm. over western Meghalaya, between 2500 to 3000 mm. over northern Meghalaya and about 4000 mm. over South-eastern Meghalaya. There is a great Variation of rainfall over central and Southern Meghalaya.

Treasure House of Nature

Meghalaya abounds in a most fascinating variety of Flora and Fauna. Most of these are typical of the tropical rain forests, but there are also fairly rare and exotic species. What is more, the topography as well as the location of the state make for a variety of life forms that nature lovers find especially attractive. The forests are notable for their biodiversity of mammals, birds, and plants. Meghalaya predominantly an agrarian economy with a significant commercial forestry industry. The important crops are potatoes, rice, maize, pineapple, bananas, papayas, spices, etc. The service sector is made up of real estate and insurance companies. Meghalaya's gross state domestic product for 2012 was estimated at Rs16173 crore (US\$ 2.4 billion) in current prices. The state is geologically rich in minerals, but it has no significant industries. The state has about 1,170 km (730 mi) of national highways. It is also a major logistical center for trade with Bangladesh.

Butterflies

The forests, meadows and orchards of Meghalaya are the habitat of thousands. types of moths and butterflies. A sampling of this wealth may be found in the privately owned Entomological Museum in Shillong.

Orchids

Meghalaya is known for its plethora of enchanting and captivating orchids. These are found growing everywhere, in the forests, nurseries and gardens. In this Orchid State of Meghalaya, all the properties and services run by MTDC are named after Orchid.

Languages

The Principal languages in Meghalaya are Khasi and Garo with English as the official language of the State, Khasi and Garo Languages and literature have developed mainly because of initiative of the Christian Missionaries. Unlike many Indian states, Meghalaya has historically followed a matrilineal system where the lineage and inheritance are traced through women; the youngest daughter inherits all wealth and she also takes care of parents.

The State of Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as an autonomous State in April 1970 and was declared a full-fledged State in January 1972. Meghalaya, situated in the north eastern region of India is a narrow stretch of land, running between Bangladesh on the South and West and Assam on the North and East, Meghalaya lies between 24 58' N to 26 07'N latitudes and 89 48'E to 92 51' E longitudes. It covers an area of 22,429 sq. km. The State has most of its land covered by hills interspersed with gorges and small valleys. Endowed with dense forests and rivers cascading down undulating terrain, this region is one of the most scenic of the North Eastern States.

Thus, out of the total forest area of 15,657 sq. km in the State only 1,027.20 sq. Km is under the control of State Forest Department, which constitutes only 4.58 % of the total geographical area of the State and 6.56 % of the total forest area of the State.

Rest of the area is either private or clan /community owned and is under the indirect control and management of the Autonomous District Councils.

It is bounded by the Brahmaputra valley of Assam in the North and Northwest and Cachar area of Assam in the East; the Surma valley (Bangladesh) borders in the South and partly in the Southwest. Meghalaya has about 443 Kms. of international border with Bangladesh. The capital of Meghalaya, Shillong was also undivided Assam's capital from 1874 till January 1972. Shillong is located at an altitude of 1496 metres above mean sea level.

The population of Meghalaya is predominantly tribal, the main tribes are the Khasis, the Jaintias and the Garos besides other plain tribes such as Koch, Rabhas and Bodos etc. The Khasis and the Jaintias predominantly inhabiting the Districts towards eastern part of Meghalaya, belong to the Proto Austroloid Monkhmer race. The western part of the State, the Garo Hills is predominantly inhabited by the Garos. The Garos belong to the Bodo family of the Tibeto-Burman race said to have migrated from Tibet. The Garos are also called Achiks. The Garo, Khasi and Jaintia societies have a matrilineal system. Meghalaya had its first Census outside Assam in 1971. At the time of taking the 1971 census, it was an autonomous Sub –State within the State of Assam with two Districts viz. Garo Hills and United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District.

The 1971 Census was then conducted Police Station-wise in the then United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District and Mouza wise in the Garo Hills District. The population of Meghalaya according to the 1971 Census was only 1,011,699, males 520,967 and females 490,732. Immediately after Meghalaya attained statehood, the Jaintia Hills Civil Subdivision of the United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District was raised to the status of a District bringing the number of Districts to 3. In October, 1976, two more Districts were created, the East Garo Hills District with head quarter at Williamnagar and the West Khasi Hills District with headquarter at Nongstoin. The erstwhile Garo Hills Districts out of which the East Garo Hills District was carved out is known as West Garo Hills District with headquarter at Tura and the then Khasi Hills District out of which the West Khasi Hills.

Thus, the number of Districts in Meghalaya stood at 5 and the same number remained during the 1981 Census. From 1981 onwards, the Census was done C & RD Block-wise with a view to providing data at grass root level for each C & RD Block for the purpose of planning and development. When Meghalaya became a State of the Indian Union, there were only 24 C.D. Blocks as they were called then. But just before the population enumeration of 1981, the government of Meghalaya carved out six new CD Blocks during 1980, one each in the Jaintia Hills, East Khasi Hills, Ri Bhoi and West Khasi Hills 5 Districts and two in the East Garo Hills District. In the 1981 Census, there were 5 Districts, 30 CD Blocks, 4902 inhabited villages and 12 towns in Meghalaya.