

CHAPTER – V

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES AND OFFICIALS OF TTAADC

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The previous chapter analysed the process of implementation of development programs. Thus, the role of VC Members, local political leaders and people's participation in the entire implementation process has been examined. In the process of analysis, few problems were detected in connection to poor implementation of development programs. In light of those problems, the following chapter analysed the relationship between elected representatives and government officials in the affairs of daily administration.

In any administrative set up, there should be proper coordination among different functionary. If there is no proper coordination and convergence among them it affects the administrative process. It is more indispensable in matters of tribal administration. The tribals, in fact, live and settled in remote and inaccessible hilly areas. This makes difficult and challenging, the task of monitoring different types of development programs and schemes, which is the demand of decentralisation. Here lies the importance of good coordination and relationship among implementers, which in one term is called governance.

5.1 Concept of Representative - Official relationship

Given the importance and universal nature of the relationship between political leaders and bureaucracy, scholars and academics have focused considerable attention on this issue. One of the most important doctrines is the politics-administration dichotomy

propounded by Woodrow Wilson in 1887. It signifies the need to create a clear separation between political and administrative responsibilities. According to Woodrow Wilson and Max Weber, politicians should act as sovereign representatives of political values and interests, and bureaucrats are subordinate policy executors, whose major concern is efficiency. However, there is mounting evidence, both theoretical and empirical, that this doctrine is far too simplistic and does not hold up in practice. Several studies have suggested that in reality the respective role conceptions and interaction patterns between politicians and administrators are more complex and differentiated (Putnam and Rockman 1981).

The first most known systematic research effort on the topic was at the beginning of the 1980s. Italy at that time, along with Britain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and United States, was part of a comparative study undertaken by Aberbach et al. (1981), on the attitudes, values and patterns of behavior of governmental elites in western democracies. They pointed out a growing involvement of civil servants in what had traditionally been described as 'political' role. They describe that the relationship between politicians and administrators, seemed to be the dominant pattern of political-administrative interaction in the eighties.

Secondly, Peters (1987) identifies five ideal-typical models of interaction on a continuum, which goes from the traditional Weberian separation and hierarchy, to the 'administrative state,' in which bureaucrats dominate the policy process, making the role of political leaders marginal. In between both ends of the continuum, there are intermediate categories of 'village life', 'functional village life' and 'adversarial politics.' In the village life model, politicians and bureaucrats have similar values and goals, most important being preserving of government, smooth process of governance. Functional model is similar to village life model, but the integration of the parties is developed through functional lines, the actors in a policy area, independent of their status, form a functional group that has little or no connections outside. In the conflict model, administrators and politicians fight for domination in policy process.

Thirdly, the more promising approach, which is attracting a growing consensus among scholars and academics, calls for a partnership between political leaders and their staff based on complementarities. The key notion of 'complementarities' is founded on the assumption that 'politicians and administrators are highly dependent upon each other for

getting their respective jobs done' (Svara 2001). For interpreting political-administrative interactions, Svara adopts two dimensions: 'political control' and 'professional independence'. The 'control dimension' refers to the capacity of politicians to set directions and maintain oversight, while the 'bureaucratic independence dimension' focuses on the professional capacity of bureaucracy in policy formulation and implementation. The author suggests that a high degree of political control may actually co-exist with a high level of bureaucratic professional independence. Svara calls this 'a state of complementarities.' It entails reciprocal influence and mutual deference between elected officials and administrators. Bureaucrats are involved in shaping policy by giving it specific content and meaning in the implementation process. Politicians oversee implementation, controlling over bureaucratic performances. In this way politicians and bureaucrats maintain distinct roles based on their perspective and values and formal positions, but their behavior necessarily overlaps.

It is, therefore, a major question, regarding what criteria should lead a society to allocate power and decision to politicians or bureaucrats in different policy implementation. As a result, conflict occurs regarding policy formulation and implementation process. Politicians are motivated by a reflection goal, whereas bureaucrats are motivated by a 'career concern.' Thus, politicians want to be re-elected but bureaucrats instead want to improve their professional prospects. These types of interest motivate them to perform well, whatever tasks they received. This is the general scenario in regards to central administration. But this type of scenario is also available at panchayat level.

Part IX of the 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution, 1992, entrusted panchayat with huge power and responsibility to administer themselves with maximum participation of local communities. The same Amendment Act was extended to the Scheduled Areas under the Provision of the Panchayat (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996, but is not applicable to Sixth Schedule Areas. However, under Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, power and responsibility is also given to grassroot local body in order to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and customary mode of dispute resolution.

In this connection, it could be said that empowerment in the context of tribal has assumed new meaning today. Tribal empowerment now is increasingly being talked about

in the sense of more and more power to tribals. That means empowerment now is being talked not in the sense of moral and legal rights or reservation in the state institutions, but in the sense of the institution or mechanism, or even power to the people whereby they could exercise greater control over their own life.¹

The following discussion makes a thorough study of the relationship between elected representatives and government officials, pattern of decision making and their cooperation and coordination in scheme implementation. For gathering information, several questions were posed to elected political leaders. Beyond interview schedule, informal discussions were also made to them regarding schemes and programs including the functioning of VC. In case of government officials such as VC Secretary and Sub-Zonal staff checklist is used to probe their interactions and relationship with elected political leaders. The researcher also gathered informal information from them by visiting their residence and by holding focus group discussions with local people.

For the purpose of the present study, officials signify to those staff of Sub-Zonal Offices under TTAADC and Secretary of VC. On the other hand, VC Members means those elected Members of VC which are administered in line with panchayat. The motivation in confining to only lower level of elected representative and officials is that, these two sets of functionaries are crucial in executing and implementing schemes and programs at grassroot level. However noble and impressive the idea and decision of higher functionary may be, village level administration could not succeed much without active involvement of village level functionary. Accordingly, a study is made on the relationship between officials of VC and Sub-Zonal Office with that of elected VC Members, which is the lowest rung of TTAADC administrative set up. Their relationship, coordination, and powers in exercising / taking final decision regarding VC related activities, is discussed in details.

5.2 Nature of relationship between VC Secretaries and VC Chairpersons

In general, the nature of relationship between officials and non-officials is governed by the traditional patterns of behavior, the pre-conceived notions and ideas, stereotype and attitudes. Mutual respect and understanding which forms the basis for

¹ Virginius Xaxa, (2001) '*Empowerment of Tribes*', in Debal K. Singharoy edition, '*Social Development and the Empowerment of marginalised Groups*', Sage Publication, New Delhi, p. 215.

cooperation and which is essential for good working relations could not develop by imposing rules and regulations. Rather, this could be developed by individual efforts at personal level and by collective efforts at institutional level.

So, to smoothly administer the functioning of VC, there should be cordial relationship between elected VC Members and Secretary. If there is a gap in cooperation between them, it adversely affects the entire process of administration. While secretary is officially appointed by the government, VC Members are elected through VC election after every five years. Both the Secretary and elected VC Members are part of the body of VC.

The functioning and administration of VC is guided by TTAADC (Establishment of Village Committee) Act 1994, and Village Committee (Administration) Rules, 2006. As per the said Act, VC is entrusted with extensive functions to initiate developmental works within the village areas. So, sub-section (2) of section 20 of TTAADC (Establishment of VC) Act 1994 point out that, VC may exercise all or any of the following functions like maintenance of village sanitation, roads, path and improvement of village well and tanks for drinking and bathing purpose. VC is also entrusted to take preventive measures against epidemic diseases, maintenance of burial and cremation grounds and maintenance of records of yearly population census, birth and death, landless and unemployed census and cattle census. In connection with social activities, VC is responsible for the maintenance of children, adult and women's education. Besides, it initiates the establishment of social and cultural clubs including reading and recreational room and popularisation of indigenous sports, folk dances and music, including celebration of other local festival. Similarly, for the maintenance of the above mentioned activities, sub-section (1) and (2) of section 21 of TTAADC (Establishment of VC) Act 1994, empowered VC to levy and collect fees at such rates as may be prescribed by Executive Committee of TTAADC. It includes fees for maintenance of primary schools, roads, bridges, path, public well, water supply, and any other subjects which may be transferred to it for maintenance. So, far as the power, functions and duties of the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of VC is concerned, sub-section (1) and (2) of section 35 of TTAADC (Establishment of VC) Act 1994, give VC the responsibility for maintenance of records of VC, and finance and administration of VC. They also exercised administrative supervision and control over the work of the Staff of VC and the officers and employees whose service may be placed at the disposal of VC by the district council.

They also represent VC in different institution constituted by State government. Besides, they perform such other functions and discharge such other duties as VC may direct or, as the District Council may by rules made in this behalf.

Similarly, VC Secretary is entrusted with wide responsibilities in regards to daily functioning of VC. While VC Chairperson is the overall in-charge of functioning of VC, the Secretary is responsible for official documentation of the entire functioning/proceeding of VC. In order to understand the actual relationship between them it would be relevant to examine the Acts and Rules. Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Village Committee (Administration) Rules, 2006, Sl. No. 13 (1) stated that, besides the duties and functions assigned to him by the Chairperson, Secretary of the Village Council is 1) responsible for collection of taxes, rates, duties, tolls and fees levied by the VC; 2) prepared the budget in time; 3) responsible for maintaining cash book and other books of account and prepares monthly and quarterly statement of account and place the same before VC; 4) keeping records of the VC in safe custody; 5) producing records before the auditors or inspecting officers as and when directed by the Chairperson or any other authority of TTAADC; 6) responsible for bringing to the notice of the Chairperson all important information; 7) shall attend all meeting of VC and forward copies of such minutes of meeting to the concerned officer of various departments as per directions of the Chairperson; 8) bring to the notice of the Chairperson all matter relating to different schemes and their implementation; 9) prepares an agenda paper and issue notice of the meeting as per direction of the Chairperson; 10) issue notice of the meeting as per direction of Chairperson; 11) responsible for submission of utilisation certificate of fund placed to VC after taking approval from the Chairperson, and 12) perform such other duties in respect of the work of VC as directed by the Chairperson / Vice-Chairperson.

On the other hand, VC Chairperson or in his/her absence Vice Chairperson, is entrusted with certain functions and duties which are enshrined in Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District (Establishment of Village Committee) Act. 1994. So, as per Sl. No. 35 (1) of the said Act. 1) VC Chairperson is responsible for the maintenance of records of VC; 2) responsible for the finance of administration of VC; 3) supervise and control over the work of the staff of VC and the officers and employees whose service may be placed at the disposal of VC by district council, and 4) represent VC in different institution constituted by state government.

As seen in the above TTAADC Acts, VC Secretary in all matters, is to act and function under the direction of Chairperson. That is, he/she has to perform the administrative function of VC as per the direction of VC Chairperson. Although, Secretary is entrusted with extensive responsibilities in the affairs of VC administration, he/she could not act independently and has to execute the functioning of VC with proper consultation and direction of Chairperson. TTAADC Acts therefore, clearly indicates the power and control exercised by the Chairperson upon the entire functioning of VC, including VC Secretary.

So, a question is asked to elect VC Members whether a good relationship exists between VC Chairperson and Secretary. Table 5.1, indicates the relationship between VC Chairperson and VC Secretary in executing daily functioning of VC.

Table 5.1
VC Chairperson's relationship with Secretary
Total Number 26

Sl. No.	Relationship between VC Chairperson and Secretary	Response			Total
		Good	Average	Not Good	
1	Indurail	1 (20.00)	1 (20.00)	3 (60.00)	5
2	Noagang	1 (20.00)	3 (60.00)	1 (20.00)	5
3	Zoitang	2 (40.00)	1 (20.00)	2 (40.00)	5
4	Jirania Khola	--	3 (75.00)	1 (25.00)	4
5	Dupcharra	1 (25.00)	1 (25.00)	2 (50.00)	4
6	Santi Nagar	2 (66.6)	1 (33.3)	--	3
	Total	7 (26.9)	10 (38.4)	9 (34.6)	26

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

Source: As per date collected from field work

Thus, 38.4 percent of them reports that VC Chairperson's relationship with VC Secretary is at an average, in the sense that it is neither good nor poor. Although considerable percentage (26.9) of them feels that their relationship is good, a huge percentage (34.6) of them directly reports that it is not good.

When the responses of elected VC Members of a particular VC are examined, 60 percent (which is also the highest) elected VC Members from Indurail VC reports the poor relationship. They strongly point out the negligence of VC Secretary who is not at all

concerned with the problems faced by the locality. Same is the case of Dupcharra VC Members, where 50 percent of them expressed VC Chairperson's poor relationship with VC Secretary. However, as per data, elected VC Members of Santi Nagar VC opined that there is cordial relationship between them, and accordingly, 66.6 percent of them strongly response their relationship to be good. It could also be mention that 75 and 65 percent of respective elected VC Members from Jirania Khola and Noagang Village asserts the relationship to be an average.

Now the question is why there is poor relationship in between VC Secretary and Chairperson and who is responsible for the poor relationship. To find out the causes of poor relationship, views were collected from those VC Chairperson who reports of poor relationship. The question is open ended, in order to get as many views from them.

From the discussion, it is found that the basic cause of poor relationship of VC Secretary with local elected leaders is because of Secretary's personal lack of interest in the affairs of local developmental activities. The question again arises why VC Secretary is not interested. The point is, in all cases, VC Secretaries posted in TTAADC are deputed from State government, as TTAADC do not have the power to recruit staff for the purpose (department-wise composition of staff has been discussed in chapter 3). In this context, it can be recalled that the Assam government created a separate cadre to serve in *Zilla* Parisad and Village Panchayats and such a cadre led to imparting of better training and cultivation of esprit de corps. So, in case of Tripura, deputed staff of VC Secretary (especially non-ST) within TTAADC generally lack proper knowledge of tribal's socio-economic milieu and find it difficult to adjust with local elected VC leaders. From the six selected VCs, all the VC Secretaries in Noagang Sub-Zone are non-ST and in Khwmulwng Sub-Zone, two are ST and one non-ST (Dupcharra VC).

More interesting fact is that, as the entire areas of TTAADC are comparatively backward and remote than non-TTAADC areas, it is regarded as a place of punishment. So, VC Secretary posted in TTAADC areas is treated as being punished. With that conception, many VC Secretary loses interest in their daily duties, which leads to irregularity in official duty.

Surprisingly, considerable numbers of them also reports of ‘neglect to tribals’ for poor relationship. That is, making use of the ignorance of rural tribes, VC Secretary (whether ST or non-ST), would not pay much attention to the developmental needs of VC.

Another cause asserted by elected VC Members for the poor relationship is ‘remote settlement.’ It is to be noted that out of the total (11, 17,566) tribal populations, 95.7 percent of them live in rural areas and only 4.2 percent (49,247) of them live in urban areas (Census of India, 2011). There are many villages where one has to go on foot for several kilometers to reach them or where commercial vehicles are not readily available. Under such situations, VC Secretary would find difficult to go to office on regular basis which eventually creates gaps between them. Taking the advantage of remote location of tribals, VC Secretary makes excuses for the irregularity, which is but a clear sign of neglect to tribals.

The intention of the above discussion is not to justify that ST VC Secretary is better than non-ST to works among the rural tribals. As stated earlier, the relationship between two sets of people is somehow governed by the traditional patterns of behavior, the pre-conceived notions and ideas, stereotype and attitudes. These attributes of relationship have direct or indirect bearings in one’s personal interest and enthusiasm. So, when non-ST is posted in a particular VC, he has to deal with the rural tribals and take care their needs and problems. At that juncture, an attitudinal gap is created in between the two sets of people because of their pre-conceived notions and ideas. Thereby, it affects the functioning of VC, in executing and implementing development works. To address the problems, the government of Tripura is taking serious efforts by posting ST as VC Secretary in TTAADC. But there is a huge shortage of staff, and in many cases, one VC Secretary is in-charge of two VCs. For instance, in Khwmulwng Sub-Zone (one of the selected Sub-Zone) there are 28 (twenty eight) VCs but only 21 (twenty one) VC Secretary. On account of shortage of VC/panchayat secretary, ‘Tripura state cabinet meeting on 10th June, 2016, resolved to recruit 400 (four hundred) person in the post of VC/panchayat secretary in an attempt to accelerate the working procedure of village level administration. Out of the proposed total posts, 200 (two hundred) post would be inducted

against existing vacancy posts and rest 200 (two hundred) posts would be for the new 200 (two hundred) gram panchayat created recently.’²

The question in regard to ‘lack of interest, neglect to tribals and remote settlement of tribals’ have also been pointed out by another scholar R.K. Mishra (1974). He stated that the serious problem connected with the development administration of tribal areas is staff absenteeism. It is usually difficult to find out willing workers to work in tribal areas. Even if some staff is posted they manage to get away from the areas as early as possible. He has suggested few suggestions to solve this problem: 1) to post local people in the tribal areas; 2) to give special incentives to the staff working in tribal areas; 3) to train local tribal people to serve in their own areas, with relaxation in recruitment standards; 4) to develop a special cadre under different disciplines for service in tribal areas, at least in important key sectors.³

5.3 Perceptions of VC Secretaries about their relationship with elected VC Chairpersons and other elected Members

The above discussion made an analysis of the relationship of elected VC Chairperson and Members with that of VC Secretary. The data presented are based on the reports of elected VC Members. Now it would be interesting to examine again, the perception of VC Secretary, about their relationship.

Most of the VC Secretary also admits that satisfactory relationship does not exist between them and elected VC Members. They have given many reasons for the causes of poor relationship. Firstly, VC Secretary reports the ‘uncooperative nature of elected VC Members’ as one of an important cause. The term ‘uncooperative’ is used here to indicate an unwillingness to extend help and assistance. VC Chairperson and Members would not cooperate with VC Secretary in different development activities. This particular reason asserted by VC Secretary is found to be convincing. In many cases tribals are not at all

² Reports of Tripura finance minister on 10th June, 2016. Retrieved from <http://tripura-infoway.com/news/details/TN/7120/cabinet-gives-nod-to-recruit-400-new-panchayat-secretaries-wage-hike-for-pump-operators.html>

³ R.K. Mishra, (1974). Some Problems of Development Administration of Tribal Areas in India, Proceeding of the Workshop on *Perspective on Tribal Development and Administration*, held on 18th to 20th April, Hyderabad: National Institute of Community development, p. 94

interested in cooperating government officials. It thereby affects their relationship pattern and poor relationship leads to unsatisfactory cooperation between both parties.

Secondly, another important reason for their poor relationship is due to ignorance of elected VC Members. Local tribal leaders would not have proper knowledge regarding the powers and functions entrusted to VC. They are unaware of various developmental activities. Elected by the people, they represent the people and would not cooperate with VC Secretary. In this connection, it could be highlighted that the process of selection of VC candidates to contest in election, is totally in the hands of concerned political parties. Local villagers could not raise their voice to put a suitable candidate of their choice, who would be beneficial for the locality. Thus, unaware candidates (especially female) who are expected to be easily influenced/controlled by higher political leaders are normally selected. But recently, especially from last VC general election 2016, younger generations having better awareness and educational qualification, have come up from various political parties in several ADC Villages, especially tribal based political parties like IPFT and INPT.

Thirdly, VC Secretary reports the remote settlement of tribal villages as an important cause for poor relationship. Location of VC, called as panchayat outside district council areas, comprised of various small tribal hamlets. The area of VC is normally very large. For administrative convenience, VC is again divided into various wards (village sansad). Each ward generally comprised of a few tribal hamlets and has its own representative in the elected VC body. It happens that, ward representative finds it difficult to regularly visit the office of VC. Being financially poor, they are more concerned with their livelihood. Thus, Secretary would find it difficult to regularly meet with local elected leaders except in VC Meeting, which are conducted once/ twice in a month.

From the above discussion on the relationship between elected VC Members and VC Secretary, it is found that a situation of blame game is taking place in between them. While elected VC Members opined 'secretary's personal disinterest' as one of the major causes of poor relationship, Secretary on the other hand, asserted the uncooperative nature of tribals and ignorance of local elected tribals for the causes of poor relationship. Whatever the cause may be, it is clear that there are certain predicaments in their reciprocal relationship towards ensuring better functioning of VC.

5.4 Perceptions of elected VC Members with regards to Secretary's commitment in VC related works

After examining the nature of relationship and cooperation, analysis is made again on the commitment of VC Secretary in the entire development activities of VC. Proper function of VC depends on the commitment of VC Secretary in executing the daily works of VC. For the present study, the term commitment is used to express the extent of dedication and sincerity in monitoring the VC level administration.

The post of Secretary (both VC and panchayat), is very important in decentralisation process. Administration at grassroot level largely depends on VC Secretary and is also responsible for it. The government of Tripura considerably applies the model of decentralisation at grassroot level and in the process empowered VC through delegation of powers and functions. Thus, attempt is made to analyse the role and commitment of VC Secretary through the report of local elected VC Members. A question is asked to those elected VC Members on the commitment of VC Secretary which is presented in table 5.2.

Table 5.2
Elected VC Member's rating on the commitment of Secretary
Total Number: 26

Sl. No.	VCs on Secretary's commitment	Response			Total
		Good	Average	Not Good	
1	Indurail	1 (20.00)	2 (40.00)	2 (40.00)	5
2	Noagang	--	3 (60.00)	2 (40.00)	5
3	Zoitang	1 (20.00)	3 (60.00)	1 (20.00)	5
4	Jirania Khola	1 (25.00)	3 (75.00)	--	4
5	Dupcharra	1 (25.00)	2 (50.00)	1 (25.00)	4
6	Santi Nagar	--	1 (33.33)	2 (66.66)	3
	Total	4 (15.38)	14 (53.84)	8 (30.76)	26

(Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage)

Source: As per date collected from field work

As shown in the above table, the overall work performance of VC Secretary, is not much satisfactory. While 15.38 percent of the elected VC Members asserts the commitment of VC Secretary as good, a huge percentage (53.84%) of them feels only to

somehow good. Considerable percentages, i.e. 30.76 percent of them feels that work performance of VC Secretary were not at all satisfactory. When they were asked to explain the causes of their dissatisfaction, they claimed the irregularities of VC Secretary in exercising daily duty. They also asserted the inexperience of VC Secretary in keeping necessary official records of VC.

In this connection, it could be asserted that VC Secretaries working within TTAADC, generally lack proper knowledge of secretarial works including basic knowledge of computer. As the Government of Tripura is steadily computerising documentation works, VC Secretary therefore, could not executes works as per the norms of government. For instance, the government of Tripura has introduced the system of computerisation of Ordinary Resident Register (ROR) at VC/panchayat level. As per the recruitment norms of government of Tripura, Panchayat Secretary including VC Secretary of TTAADC should be graduates in qualification and possessed diploma certificate in computer application. But it has been found that some VC Secretary would not have those criteria. Higher officials has revealed the condition of anonymity in recruitment of panchayat Secretary and reported that there is much involvement of favoritism in the process of recruitment of panchayat Secretary. Many VC Secretaries are directly or indirectly recruited through party affiliation. Persons having better relationship with ruling political party were given preference regardless of qualification and experience. Initially, they were appointed on contractual basis and were regularised after completion of five years. However, recruitment is also done through state public service commission from last few years.

Despite incompetency of Secretary in executing VC related works, VC Members would never approach higher officials/authorities to complain. Accordingly, no records were found in the process of data collection, like suspension or disciplinary action being taken to Secretary because of their irregularity or incompetency. One fact found from the discussion is that Secretary posted in TTAADC areas (especially remote areas), were intentionally neglecting their daily duties so as to get transferred outside TTAADC. Thus, VC Secretaries perceive getting posted in TTAADC areas as a punitive measure.

5.5 Relationship between VCs and Sub-Zonal Office as per Act and Rules

Before discussing the relationship between elected VC Members and Sub-Zonal Officials, it would be relevant to study the Act and Rules of TTAADC, pertaining to administrative control exercised upon VC. Body of VC includes both elected VC Members and Secretaries attached to a particular VC. In normal administrative set up of TTAADC, the immediate higher office to VC is Sub-Zonal Development Office (SZDO). And above SZDO, there is Zonal Development Office (ZDO), which administered several SZDO. And above ZDO there is TTAADC Head Office, which is highest rung in the administrative hierarchy.

However, TTAADC Village Committee (Administration) Rules, 2006, has not cited any Rules which empower SZDO to direct VC. As per the said Rules, matters related to administration of VC are rather controlled by ‘Zonal Development Office (ZDO).’⁴ Thus, VC is directly accountable to ZDO. Firstly, leave of VC Members could be granted by ZDO on the recommendation of the Chairperson of concerned VC, and VC Secretary should report sanction of such leave to ZDO (Rule No. 12.1 of VC Administration Rules). Besides, in case of a temporary vacancy arises in offices of both Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, the VC Secretary with prior approval of ZDO shall call an emergency meeting of VC (Rule 3.4). The ZDO on receipt of the meeting’s resolution shall appoint a temporary Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson accordingly. Secondly, ZDO is also empowered for removal and resignation of VC Members (Rule 5.2). He shall exercise these functions only on the basis of communication received from the concerned VC. In case of removal of both Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, temporary charge would be taken by any VC Member appointed by ZDO (Rule 5.7). Thirdly, in matter of conducting a meeting of Village Sansad and Village Sabha, VC shall identify and constitute a number of Village Sansad within the VC area as per convenience. After constitution of Village Sansad, VC should give detailed intimation to ZDO (Rule 14.1). Similarly, a copy of the minute of Village Sansad and Village Sabha should be sent to the concerned ZDO (Rule 14.11). Fourthly, every VC should prepare the report of works done by it in the previous year and work to be done in the next year and the report should be passed by VC in the form of a resolution before 30th April of every year and should be submitted to ZDO (Rule

⁴ The administrative hierarchy of TTAADC is divided into: Head Quarter > Zonal Development Office (ZDO) > Sub-Zonal Development Office (SZDO) > VC.

5.11). Fifthly, ZDO should constitute a Vigilance Committee. The Committee should submit a quarterly vigilance report to ZDO. He may also direct the Committee to submit a report on all or any specific aspect of the functioning of VC (Rule 17. 1 and 3).

This creates confusion and the question is whether VC should follow the direction of SZDO or ZDO in the affairs of administration. The problem remains that if VC is fully under the administrative direction of ZDO, what would be the actual role of SZDO. The said Rules naturally debar a healthy relationship between the two administrative units – VC and SZDO. It prevents SZDO in administering the functioning of VC and therefore, SZDO would not interfere much in the affairs of VC related activities.

In case of general administration outside TTAADC areas, gram panchayat is accountable to Block Development Officer (BDO) in many aspects. For instance, casual leave of Pradhan and Upa Pradhan could be granted by Panchayat Samiti and Block Development Officer as per Sl. No. 3 (1) of Tripura Panchayat (Administration Rules) 1994. Again, BDO has the power to accept the resignation and removal of Pradhan and Upa Pradhan, and appoint temporary in-charge accordingly. Besides, a copy of reports of the work of gram panchayat should be submitted to BDO and the same could appoint an observer for gram panchayat meeting, who shall submit the reports to concerned BDO. Thus, as per panchayat Acts and Rules, BDO could exercise control to panchayat in many areas of operation.

5.6 Relationship between elected VC Members and Sub-Zonal Staff in practice

An analysis is made again on the nature of relationship between elected VC Members and Sub-Zonal Staff in practice. Relationship in practice indicates the nature of relationship while administering daily activities. Based on the nature of relationship in practice, the present study tries to find out the level of cooperation between them in executing developmental works of VCs. In studying the relationship between elected VC Members and Sub-Zonal Staff, the main focus would be the relationship of elected VC Chairperson with that of Sub-Zonal Staff; because as per TTAADC VC (Administration) Rules, the elected VC Chairperson is in-charge of the overall functioning of VC. So, it is elected VC Chairperson who has to visit SZDO for any sort of schemes and programs and staff of SZDO should also communicate with the VC Chairperson in all VC related matters. Table 5.3 indicates the nature of relationship between them.

Table 5.3
Elected VC Members' rating on the relationship between
VC Chairpersons with Sub-Zonal Staff

Total Number: 26

Sl. No.	VC Chairperson's relationship with Sub-Zonal Staff	Response			Total
		Good	Average	Not Good	
1	Indurail	1 (20.00)	3 (60.00)	1 (20.00)	5
2	Noagang	--	2 (40.00)	3 (60.00)	5
3	Zoitang	2 (40.00)	1 (20.00)	2 (40.00)	5
4	Jirania Khola	2 (50.00)	1 (25.00)	1 (25.00)	4
5	Dupcharra	2 (50.00)	1 (25.00)	1 (25.00)	4
6	Santi Nagar	--	1 (33.33)	2 (66.00)	3
	Total	7 (26.9)	9 (34.6)	10 (38.4)	26

(Figures in the parenthesis indicates percentage)

Source: As per data collected from field work

The above table 5.3 clearly shows the unsatisfactory relationship which exists between elected VC Chairperson and Sub-Zonal Staff. While 38.4 percent of elected VC Members strongly admit the poor relationship between them, 34.6 percent of them admit to be an average. However, only 26.9 percent of them expressed their good relationship. When VC wise percentage is examined, Noagang and Santi Nagar elected VC Members recorded highest percentage (60% and 66% respectively), who reported the poor relationship between elected VC Members and Sub-Zonal Staff. But, Jirania Khola and Dupchhara VC reported their good relationship with Sub-Zonal Staff.

From the response of elected VC Members, it is found that, one of the major problems in their relationship is because of irregularities of Staff working in SZDO. In fact, irregularity of office staffs has been found during data collection. Their negligence in their daily duty makes difficult to meet them to discuss important issues. It is further proved that, most of the Sub-Zonal Development Officers go to office to execute their daily duty once or twice a week. That is, they went to office only to give their signature and seal wherever required. Other Sub-Zonal staff is informed to be present on a particular working day fixed by the Sub-Zonal Officer and all important works is done on that fixed date. Same is the case for other staff. Most of them went to office lately and stay an hour or two. Thus, elected VC Chairperson would not visit Sub-Zonal Office, because staffs

are not available during office hour. When asked to elected VC Members whether they complaint to higher office against the staff of SZDO, they told of not having much idea and their complaint would not make much difference. The point is, elected VC Members being generally unaware, would not have courage to personally intervene, because anomaly in the functioning of SZDO is not something unusual for the general public. It thereby affects the relationship pattern between the two administrative set-ups. Based on the nature of relationship, attempt has been made again to examine the level of cooperation extended between the two administrative units. Cooperation indicates the extent of assistance and help received by elected VC Members in executing daily functioning of VC, including implementation of development programs. Cooperation and coordination with local tribal leaders is very much essential, because they generally lack experience and knowledge. They need proper care and guidance in executing daily administration of VC. Table 5.4 illustrates VC Member's rating on the cooperation of Sub-Zonal staff.

It is found that 42.3 percent of them, which is also the highest percentage, assert the cooperation of Sub-Zonal Staff at an average. However, 26.9 percent of them strongly believe the cooperation to a great extent. Besides, considerable percentage, i.e. 30.7 percent of them asserts that VCs does not receive any cooperation at all from Sub-Zonal Staff. VC wise percentage indicates that 50 percent from Jirania Khola and 40 percent each from Indurail and Noagang VC claims the poor cooperation of Sub-Zonal Staff. But, 50 percent of Dupchhara VC assert of receiving full cooperation.

In this connection, it is worth mentioning that Sub-Zonal Offices are in very weak financial condition. Despite mammoth responsibility vested to Sub-Zonal Office it lacks adequate finance to run daily duties. Its infrastructures are not better than normal office of VC. The question which has to be answered now is whether this sort of office could administer such a large number of VCs. To officially administer large numbers of VCs, Sub-Zonal Office should be financially empowered to provide basic facilities in connection with development related matters. But it lacks all those facilities and as a result elected VC Members would not give importance to SZDO.

Table: 5.4
Elected VC Members' rating on the cooperation of Sub-Zonal staff
Total Number: 26

Sl. No.	Rate the Cooperation of Sub-Zonal staff with VC	Response			Total
		To a great extent	To some extent	Not at all	
1	Indurail	1 (20.00)	2 (40.00)	2 (40.00)	5
2	Noangang	2 (40.00)	2 (40.00)	1 (20.00)	5
3	Zoitang	--	3 (60.00)	2 (40.00)	5
4	Jirania Khola	1 (25.00)	1 (25.00)	2 (50.00)	4
5	Dupcharra	2 (50.00)	2 (50.00)	--	4
6	Santi Nagar	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)	1 (33.3)	3
	Total	7 (26.9)	11 (42.3)	8 (30.7)	26

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate percentage)

Source: As per data collected from field work

5.7 Perceptions of Sub-Zonal Staff with regard to their relationship with Elected VC Chairpersons and Members

As mentioned earlier, officials were interviewed with a checklist. Besides, informal discussions were also conducted with them. Discussions were made with Sub-Zonal Development Officers (SZDOs), Head Clerk, 'field staff'⁵ and other clerical staff. In this connection it can be mentioned that the researcher found it difficult to meet the officials. In order to meet them, the researcher has to make telephonic contact beforehand, as they are not readily available during office hour.

So far as their relationship with elected VC members is concerned, they reported that healthy relationship does not exist between them. From those staff with which discussion has been made, there is one answer in common. Neither SZDO field staff regularly make visit to VC Offices nor do elected VC Members visit Sub-Zonal Office. Because of such gap of communication between them, all sorts of malfunctions in an

⁵ By field staff it indicates that SZDO staffs who generally works outside with various VC. They deal only with those schemes and programs under the purview of District Council. They are posted in Sub-Zonal Offices.

administration like inadequate cooperation, inadequate information to VC, lack of awareness about various development schemes among VC Members, problems of coordination in implementation etc, crop up. In such organisational environment, smooth policy formulation could not be ensured.

From the reports of officials regarding their relationship with VC Members it is found that VC received maximum administrative direction form Zonal Office rather than Sub-Zone. As a result, VC Members find no point of visiting Sub-Zonal Office and discuss essential matters with the staff. Similarly, Sub-Zonal Staff feel reluctant to cooperate with VC. This eventually generates gaps between them, which could not be bridged without proper renovation of administrative strategy.

Besides, it could be pointed out that Sub-Zonal Office is found to be a mere ceremonial office, so far as powers and functions are concerned. One common answer is received from both elected VC Members and Sub Zonal Staff. Elected VC Members reports that it received limited schemes and projects through Sub-Zonal Office and similarly, Sub-Zonal Staff also claims that they are a ceremonial office in terms of powers and functions. To authenticate their statement, the actual function of Sub-Zonal Office is further analysed and found that, for formality, staff is entrusted to administer various works but without works.

5.8 Role of Party Leaders in the relationship pattern

Role of party leaders at the grassroot level democracy in Tripura is somewhat perceptible. Its presence could be felt in every aspect of the functioning of government and is more felt in larger intensity at VC level. CPI(M) has been ruling Tripura for last three decades and to study the role of party leaders in Tripura indicates the study of the role of CPI(M) party leaders. In this connection, it could be pointed out that the pattern of party politics that exists in Tripura is a replica of the then CPI(M) government in West Bengal.

There are two aspects of interference in official proceedings at VC level. One is political interference exerted by elected local political leaders and the other is party interference by local party leaders of the locality. In many aspects, it is difficult to identify whether certain interference is made by elected political leaders or by party leaders; because they are two sides of the same coin. Some VC Secretary reported that they have

been receiving undue party pressure in matters of decision making at VC level. Due to party pressure, VC Secretary sometimes lost enthusiasm in official works and thereby crippled the functioning of VC. When VC Secretary lost enthusiasm in works, it has much bearing on the relationship pattern, including cooperation, coordination etc., with elected VC Members and thereby creates chaos in implementing schemes and programs as discussed in Chapter 4.

Another interesting aspect is that, in many cases, officials (any departments) willingly neglect official duties, which hampers the smooth functioning of administration. However, concerned authority could not take action on that particular official because that official is a party cadre actively participating in party related works through respective pro-party pressure groups and interest groups. There is an instance where the incumbent Panisagar Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM), under North Tripura revenue district, who is Tripura Civil Service (TCS) cadre, even participates in party rally in 2014.⁶ So, those VC Secretary and staffs of Sub-Zonal office having direct links with party leaders are taking undue advantage by neglecting their official duty.

But interference of party leaders too has certain positive aspect for the locality. Through an act of local party vigilance, officials could not exercise excessive powers at the cost of the locality and have to prioritise the needs of people. Local party leaders act as a watchdog of the locality and thereby people's general decision stands valid as against the monopolised decision of the official. There are also instances that when a citizen faced certain official problems, official on duty has to instantly take care the problems of a citizen at the insistence of party leaders of that locality.

5.9 Summing Up

One of the requirements for the success of village level administration is understanding and harmony between elected representative and officials. Establishment of VC at village level is an attempt to build political, economic and social democracy at grassroot level based on democratic decentralisation of power and responsibility through statutory local bodies. The problem of elected representative and officials is not a characteristic at village level administration only. It also exists at the higher level of

⁶ As per reports of some Indurail (one of the selected VC) party members, taking part in the same party rally.

administration and even at national level. But it is only at village level that it adversely affects the system of administration. Because, while at the higher level the problem is one of individual relationship between the civil servants and political leaders, at grassroot level it is the relationship between officials of lesser maturity and elected representative, with little or no experience of administrative system. Moreover, political pressures tend to be more intensive at the lower levels as individual stake holder in administrative decision become more direct and clear. So, maintaining good relation with elected representative without violating the rules as prescribed by government is more difficult compared to state or central institutions.

This problem is in fact faced by VCs of TTAADC. Good relationship between VC elected representative and Secretary is a matter of concern. While VC Chairperson assumed of Secretary having a lackadaisical attitude to tribals, Secretary on the other hand reported about VC elected representative as uncooperative and ignorant. The allegation of both sets of people could not be totally ignored. All VC Secretaries posted in TTAADC are deputed staff from State government and they generally lack knowledge of the tribal milieu, which makes them difficult to adjust. To minimise the gaps in between the two sets of people, the suggestion given by RK Mishra could be practice, that is, to post local people in the tribal areas. In addition, it has been found that, the general decision of the government not to undertake regular recruitments of Panchayat/VC Secretary has meant that vacancies of gram panchayat/VC secretaries are filled through short term strategies like regularisation of staff that has been recruited in an ad hoc manner. Thus, the post of Panchayat/VC Secretary has been filled through the promotion of gram sevek (post created to monitor MGNREGA works) and other workers. These people lack clear knowledge about the way accounts should be maintained and the details regarding the administration of Panchayat/VC.

In this connection, it could be suggested that powers and functions of VC need to be at par with gram panchayat, as they both functions as the basic units of governance. In the present set up, gram panchayat is given much more functions as compared to VC, pertaining to developmental and welfare aspects. As per Tripura Panchayat Act, 1993, panchayat have extensive additional powers and functions as compare to VC of TTAADC. Those powers and functions includes: 1) rehabilitation of displaced persons; 2) care of the infirm and the destitute; 3) improve breeding of cattle, medical treatment of cattle and

prevention of cattle diseases; 4) supervision of supply of foods and essential commodities through ration shops; 5) rural housing program; 6) arranging cultivation of land lying fallow; 7) promotion of village plantation, social forestry and farm forestry; 8) rural electrification; and 9) family welfare, and women and child development etc. As the powers and functions of VC is limited, compared to panchayat, it has not much succeeded in bringing development and autonomy among the tribals. Thus, in many cases VC remains a superficial body with no much impact on the poor tribals.

When the provisions of 73rd Amendment of the Indian Constitution is compared with those district councils under the Sixth Schedule, it is found that district councils have several regulatory powers subject to state government control but panchayats are in more advantageous position in respect of developmental functions. The sources of income of district councils are less stable. In fact, they are solely at the mercy of the state government, whereas the panchayat bodies are entitled to get funds from the state and central government under several schemes, in addition, to their own regular sources of income by taxation, mobilisation of locally available resources (Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, 2005).

One of the major drawbacks of district council vis-a-vis panchayat is that while in panchayat power percolates down to the village level, in councils it is concentrated at the district level. This creates problems in empowerment of people at the grassroot level. It has also been argued that district councils would be more effective if villages under such councils are empowered.