

## **Exploring Participatory Development for Rural People: A Study of Two Blocks in Darjeeling District**

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**Abstract:** Development has many approaches and forms, but in the sense of transformation for the better, it bears little meaning unless participatory methods are used to mobilise the local people to action. It becomes necessary to understand that people's participation is a central feature of contemporary thinking about rural development. Therefore, a specific focus is put on participatory development which is supposed to facilitate people's participation in the rural development programmes that are supposed to improve their socio-economic condition. The study based on select rural segments of Darjeeling Hills of the State of West Bengal, India delves into space and scope for local, need-based people-centric development from the specific methodological vantage point of Participatory Development. The basic premise of the study is that there has to be an inalienable linkage of development and participation if development is supposed to aim for the welfare of the 'ordinary people'. The study also seeks to fill in a certain gap as the area has not been adequately explored in terms of participatory development. Findings reveal that the existence of a single-tier Panchayat system and again its dissolution in 2005 (stands dissolved to date) due to the political turmoil in the Darjeeling Hills has hindered smooth participation of the rural people. Hopefully, they now appear to have found some kind of an 'outlet' of interaction and articulation to co-operate with the government and non-government agencies for activities meant to improve their lives.

*Key words :* Community, Darjeeling Hills, Gram Panchayat, Local Rural People, Participatory Development, Socio-Economic Development.