CHAPTER - 6

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Democracy is rooted in the Indian villages through panchayati raj. People of rural areas have been given an opportunity to implement the grass roots planning as desired by them through their elected representatives. The task of selecting the leaders is in their hands now. The rural masses are involved in the rural reconstruction work. Their participation has been ensured through 73rd constitutional amendment. All the sections of society are involved in the democratic process. The main focus of this empirical research is to examine the trends emerging in leadership of PRIs in Himachal Pradesh after 73rd constitutional amendment. Researcher has selected a zila parishad, three panchayat samities and eighteen gram panchayats of district Mandi in H.P. The selection of the problem was purposive, stratified and random. The district under study is situated in hilly areas of Himachal Pradesh except a few valleys. Most of the people of this district are engaged in agriculture and allied activities including horticulture, animal husbandry, etc.

Various studies relating to panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) have been done, at all India level as well as state level, but their perspective was narrow and different. In Himachal Pradesh the study of S. Bhatnagar on Panchayati Raj in Kangra District, O.C. Sud on Administrative Problems of Rural Development in India and Shakuntla Sharma on grass root politics and Panchayati Raj were considered pioneer work in this field. But they have taken different issues of PRIs in different circumstances and time. After the freedom of India, PRIs came into existence in Himachal Pradesh under Panchayati Raj Act, 1952 and
started its functioning in 1954 when 466 GPs were established in the state. Proper shape was given to PRIs in H.P. after Balwantra Mehta Committee report and three tier system of PR was made under Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1968.

The study of emerging leadership has to be viewed in the context of panchayati raj in H.P. The analysis of legal framework and the actual working of PRIs has been done. This study has also been directed with the objectives to assess the emerging leadership in PRIs of H.P. after the enactment of Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj Act, 1994 in compliance of 73rd constitutional amendment.

In the first chapter introduction, objectives, scope, sampling procedure, methodology and the review of existing literature has been discussed. The review of literature in this field confirmed that there were hardly any study dealing with the emerging leadership in PRIs of H.P. comprehensively and empirically.

Chapter second has been divided into two parts. In the first part a brief profile of Himachal Pradesh has been discussed which includes history, society, politics, geography and economy of the state. The early history of Himachal Pradesh is an account of migration of people of different races from the Indian plains and central Asia. It was called “Jallandhar Khand” according to Purans. Kols are stated to be the earliest original inhabitants of the state. There were tribal republic of ancient Himachal i.e. Adumbaras, the Trigarta, the Kuluta, the Kulinda and the Yaudheyas. Himachal Pradesh also took part in the freedom struggle of India under the political organization called Praja Mandal. It came into existence on 15th April, 1948 and achieved statehood on 25th January
1971 as eighteenth state of the Indian Union. Indian National Congress (INC) and Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) are the major political parties including a few regional parties like Himachal Vikas Congress (HVC), etc. Before 14th Lok Sabha election 2004, the founder of HVC Pt. Sukh Ram had rejoined the INC. Himachal is known as Dev Bhumi (The land of Gods). There are number of Devi's and Devta's in every village around whom the community life revolves. The people of the state are considered to be innocent, honest, peace loving and hardworking.

Himachal Pradesh is predominantly a rural state. It is situated in the north-west of Himalayas and characterized with hilly terrain, snow covered mountain ranges and green valleys. Agriculture is the major occupation of the people. Cash crops i.e. Apple, Potato, Peas, Tomato, Ginger, Rajmah (Beans), Kiwi fruits, Citrus fruits and Floriculture are becoming popular day by day. The state has a large potential for the generation of hydel power and of tourism.

In the second part of the chapter, a brief profile of the study area (District Mandi) has been discussed, which includes the history of Mandi and Suket princely states.

Third chapter is also divided into two parts. Part first deals with the brief history of panchayati raj institutions in India since ancient time, in which the system of PRIs is discussed during medieval period, British period and the views of M.K. Gandhi in this regard. The evolution of PRIs after the freedom of India mainly 73rd constitutional amendment has also been discussed. Second part gives a sketch of organizational set-up of Himachal Pradesh Panchayati Raj. It deals with the evolution of Panchayati Raj in H.P. also. There were no single panchayat acts in
operation before the existence of H.P. The origin of panchayats in H.P. dates back to 1908 when Raja Bijai Chand of Kahloor established quomi panchayats. Punjab Gram Panchayat Act 1939 was operational at the time of independence of India. the HPPR Act was passed in 1952 and came into force in 1954. The HPPR Act, 1968 was enacted to incorporate the major recommendations of B.R. Mehta committee including three tier system. Although apex tier (ZP) was not constituted, since the recommendations of committee were not mandatory as it lacks constitutional binding on the states. The provision of panchayati raj was kept under article 40 in Directive Principle's of State Policy which resulted in half hearted measures on the part of state governments, because it was added to the state list. As a result of indifferent attitude of ruling parties of the states towards these institutions, its growth and development remained below expectations. So there were many flaws in the implementations of panchayati raj. Prior to the 73rd amendment the fate of PR was in the hands of ruling party of the state, H.P. Government enacted HPPR Act 1994 conformity with 73rd amendment. According to Act, the provision of three tier system, regular elections, reservation for SCs, STs and women (one-third), strengthening of Gram Sabha, constitution of State Finance Commission, State Election Commission, allocation of 29 subjects to PRIs, two child norm, etc. were made. State Government took some steps such as supervisory powers to PRIs in case of school and other local level departments, four meetings of gram sabha, constitution of up-gram sabha and power to select the beneficiaries by gram sabha makes PRIs more effective in Himachal Pradesh.
Field study has been conducted to analyse the emerging leadership in PRIs in H.P. after 73rd constitutional amendment. Chapter 4th and 5th are based on the data, collected from the grass roots leaders, who were elected in 2000 elections of PRIs. Social and economic factors play an important role in the selection of leaders. In chapter 4th the profile of the respondents have been discussed. In the first part of the chapter various aspects of leadership such as definition, theories and types have been discussed. Major part of the chapter deals with the determinants or socio-economic background of rural leadership. The study reveals that the younger strata is coming forward in these institutions in contrast to earlier pattern of leadership, which was generally the elder strata of the society. At the same time the mandatory provision of 33 per cent reservation to women, the female strata of rural population is taking active part in this process. Similarly SCs, STs and OBCs are also taking active part in the grass roots institutions in H.P. Since the state is dominated by Hindu Community which accounts for around 94.4 per cent of the state population. The literacy rate of the state is about 77.13 per cent, so the educated leadership is emerging and taking active part in the affairs of panchayati raj. The state is dominated by bi-party system (INC & BJP) barring state assembly election 1998 in which Himachal Vikas Congress also played a significant role in the formation of coalition government. Leaders of PRIs mainly belongs to middle class whose annual income was between Rs. 10,000 to 50,000, very few respondents belongs to higher class family. The rural leadership had emerged mostly having agricultural background and the size of holdings is very small. The study also reveals that joint family system is still prevalent in the rural areas of 344
the Mandi district. It has been observed that majority of the leaders were aware of two-child norm as laid down by the H.P. government. But at the same time they were of the opinion that this norm should be implemented at other levels also in the state. It has been found that in the rural politics middle class leaders have their dominance. The impact of mass media has resulted in awareness in the rural leadership. The Radio and Television were found the most popular means of information. Newspapers has little impact on rural population. Majority of the respondents were not satisfied with the government support price policy because farmers were not getting remunerative price for their crops. However, respondents were found satisfied with the Public Distribution System (PDS) of the state government. This system in H.P. is considered quite effective, which provides essential commodities in the rural areas.

The most effective determinants in the PRIs election is personality of the leaders and in certain cases the caste factor also plays a significant role. Religion has no place in the rural polities of H.P. A significant trend has also been noticed that even leaders of SCs and OBCs got elected from non-reserved seats to these institutions due to their personal rapport with the masses. It appears that this awareness has resulted such kind of development. It was noticed that sub-regional feelings also influence the local politics of PRIs. Apart from it, as usual, money and local brew also have little impact in the rural politics but respondents were not ready to accept this factor openly.

Majority of respondents were not found aware of the provisions and main implications of the HPPR Act, 1994 after about 10 years of implementation. They had no idea about the system. When the question
about the election of PRI's was asked most of the leaders were satisfied with the existing procedure of elections.

The study also deals with the important aspect of reservation to the various sections of society including women. The study indicates the acceptance of reservation on rotation basis. Although a few respondents were not satisfied especially women reservation. They were of the opinion that the participation and involvement of women is not up to the mark because of social taboos and psychological barrier. A few new comers and illiterate women were observed dependent on their husband or male counterpart.

The elections of PRI's are contested on non-party line and majority of the leaders of these institutions were against party based election however, after the election each political party claim their victory in the elections of PRI's, by giving their data. Involvement of political parties directly or indirectly is one of the major cause of factionalism and groupism in the rural areas.

The leaders of PRI's accepted that caste factor still dominates our rural society to some extant but data reveals that now higher caste monopoly over grass roots institutions has decreased to a greater extent. Further data shows that the extent of people's participation and involvement has been increased considerably after the implementation of 73rd amendment in H.P.

In H.P, three tier system of PR has been adopted and most of the respondents were satisfied with the existing structural arrangement of PRI's. Majority of the leaders accepted GP as most powerful tier and apex tier is (ZP) weakest. The study reveals that theoretically state government
has given lot of powers to PRIs (29 subjects in 11th schedule) but in
practice government still hesitant in this regard. Leaders of grass roots
institutions has accepted the fact that after the adoption of 73rd
amendment there is considerable change in their status and position
(good honorarium and other facilities).

The institution of Gram Sabha is an important part of the present
organizational structure of PRIs. It is the hub of the system, in addition
this, H.P. Government has implemented the up-gram sabha at ward level.
Data reveals that meetings and function of GS is still far from satisfactory.
The major reason behind the poor working of this institution is basically
weak financial position, at the same time illiteracy and ignorance of the
rural masses also contribute their indifferent attitude to this effect. It has
been observed that the rural masses takes interest only in such matters
which pertains to them in GS meetings. There is a lack of involvement of
the masses in the general issues of rural upliftment.

The other findings of this study is that most of the leaders accepted
PRIs as training centre for upper level politics and instrument of rural
development. The financial paucity is the major hurdle in the proper
functioning of PRIs. Although separate State Finance Commission has
been constituted yet the poor financial health of the state government
failed to provide adequate funds for these institutions. However, majority
of the respondents were ignorant about the provision of State Finance
Commission for the PRIs. The leaders of these institutions felt the need of
generating their own resources. Under the new Act the arbitress of the
pradhan has been reduced to a greater extent by strengthening the
institutions of gram sabha. Gram Panchayat is considered the executive
body to implement the decisions taken in the gram sabha. However, in certain cases the poor participation of masses in the meetings of gram sabha provided an opportunity to the panchayat pradhan to act arbitrarily. It has also been found that state government still exercise effective control over PRIs through its bureaucratic structure. Therefore majority of the respondents were not happy with this excessive control of state government on these institutions. The existing role as well as arrangement of bureaucracy and higher level political interference is also against the spirit of democratic decentralization. Some of the respondents were of the opinion that PRIs should have its own bureaucratic structure under the direct control of the elected representatives. Grass roots planning is the integral part of the democratic decentralization but it is still in infancy. The study reveals that existing rural development schemes are useful to the people. Respondents were satisfied with the ongoing rural development schemes which have changed the rural scenario yet some hindrances are there and undeserving people are getting benefits while deserving ones being ignored. Although, respondents did not express openly about malpractices in the election of two tiers (PS and ZP), yet the fact is that ruling party manages to capture certain positions by way of political manipulations.

It is true that higher level political elites (Ministers, MLAs, MPs) are not very enthusiastic about the empowering of these institutions. Women participation and involvement is not so effective so far, in this way PRIs in H.P. seems in transitional stage. The success of PRIs largely depends on the leaders and they must be deeply committed to the panchayati raj. There is a ray of hope that with the emergence of young, educated,
committed and enlightened leadership will work for the betterment of the rural life. However 73rd amendment is really a revolutionary step in this regard but it take will time.

**Suggestions**

Various problems were identified and highlighted by the respondents and the researcher also observed some drawbacks in the functioning of PRIs in H.P. during the present study. In order to make the panchayati raj system viable and vibrant the certain steps needs to be taken.

1. Orientation and refresher courses for the newly elected representative immediately after the election should be conducted by the panchayati raj department to acquaint them with the system. They should be made well concerned with the system. So that they can contribute in the whole process.

2. Minimum educational qualification should be laid down to contest the election of PRIs.

3. Financial position of PRIs should be strengthened. Without adequate finances their status and position cannot improved. PRIs should get more powers to levy taxes locally so that revenue of these bodies could be generated from their own resources. Dependence on governmental aids cannot improve the position of PRIs. State Finance Commission should work independently and effectively because this institution is still unknown to the leaders of PRIs and masses. It is not performing the expected job.

4. Development funds should be directly distributed to the PRIs according to their plans and local needs. For that approval of the
District Planning Committee (DPC) should be taken. MP's and MLA's should also consult elected representatives of PRIs for the proper allocation of funds. Political interference and partiality should be minimized in the allocation of budget.

5. There should be proper audit system at all the levels of PRIs. Especially at gram panchayat level there should be transparency in the system, for that the accounts should be placed before the gram sabha. Working of Junior Engineer (JE) at block level should be properly audited and made transparent because in certain case quality of work is not upto the standard laid down by the government.

6. Gram Sabha and UP-Gram Sabha is like a parliament at local level and it is the heart of this system. So these institutions should be strengthened and needs to involves the masses. Identification of beneficiaries in the rural development schemes should be made transparent through gram sabha. For the effective participation and involvement of people in the meetings of gram sabha, its quorum should be reduced to 1/10 of the local population. At the same time there should only be two meetings of gram sabha instead of four.

7. The devolution of powers to PRIs should be mandatory and it should be based on the cardinal principle that what is appropriate for a tier should be done by that tier not by another. All the tiers should be given powers and functions clearly. More powers should be given to upper two tiers. In the matter of public appointments like Water Carrier, Panchayat Sahayak, Panchayat Technical
Assistant, Gramin Vidya Upasak, etc. at village level the members of PS and ZP are not involved in the whole process. The leaders of upper two tiers should also be involved and interference of Ministers, MLAs, and MPs should be discouraged. Too much political interference was witnessed in such appointments.

8. Mere reservation for weaker sections of society is not ultimate remedy to ensure their involvement in PRIs. Because some of the members of reserved categories especially women feel handicapped to perform their duties. There should be some mechanism to educate them to ensure their participation properly.

9. Malpractices in the elections of chairperson of PS and ZP can be reduced by the way of direct election like the election of gram panchayat pradhan.

10. Two-child norm should be adopted uniformly for MPs and MLAs also. A person having more than one spouse should also be debarred to contest the elections of PRIs, MPs and MLAs. Two-child norm should be reintroduced in all the elected offices.

11. Interference and control of government and bureaucracy should be reduced but it cannot be totally free from the control and supervision. It was observed that DC, ADC, SDM and BDO acts in accordance with the wishes of the ruling party of the state. Bureaucracy should work as guide and friends to the representatives of PRIs. An independent bureaucracy for PRIs is therefore suggested. All matters of local importance should be under the direct control of elected representatives of panchayati raj.
12. MPs and MLAs are the ex-officio members of PRIs, which creates unnecessary interference in its working such as allotment of houses under IAY and other facilities. They do not want to share their power with the members of PRIs. Moreover, they should open heartedly accept the relevance of this third stratum of democracy instead of step-motherly treatment. There is need of strong political will to strengthen the grass roots institutions.

13. More judicial powers needs to be given to there institutions.

14. Accountability should be ensured towards PRIs by the various departments responsible for the implementation of different developmental schemes. Officers of these departments should accept the fact that ultimate powers lie with the people.

15. Micro-level planning should be encouraged and State Planning Commission for the PRIs should be made on the line of State Finance Commission. Planning should come from the grass roots level.

16. Proper Co-ordination and linkage among three tiers should be maintained and the members of PRIs should work in a team spirit for making self-government successful.

17. Unanimous election should be encouraged and special attention should be given to backward and tribal panchayats.

18. Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) should play constructive role in the working of PRIs.

19. Reservation on rotation basis should be revised and it should become effective after two terms/10 years because a pradhan
knows that he would not be the next representative, so he does not take interest in the working.

20. The office of Up Pradhan is without specific powers, so this office should assign some specific function because a few leaders were of the opinion to abolish this office.

21. Awareness among the masses and leaders will encourage their participation and involvement in the working of PRIs. So media should play effective role in educating the rural masses.

22. There is a need of a balanced and integrated approach to develop the semi-urban areas where rural as well as urban bodies exist.

23. Political parties should educate their cadres to play a constructive role for the successful working of this system instead of making factionalism in rural society.