Conclusion

The Parliamentary Committee System has acquired significance as important institutional mechanism of offloading responsibilities of the Parliament over the years of parliamentary democracy in India. The Committee System has proved its relevance in numerous ways across the world, but mainly in facilitating the effective functioning of legislature and ensuring governmental accountability to the Parliament. It is more so in case of India. Indian Parliament has to discharge wide range of responsibilities relating to both legislative proposals and administrative functions. These responsibilities may not be discharged effectively and in time bound manner without the support of the parliamentary committee system. An elaborate form of committee system of Parliament makes it possible to discharge parliamentary responsibilities in a more effective manner.

The establishment of Parliamentary Committee System in India has strong logic rooted in the specificity of its own. The most important among them is the objective of ensuring executive accountability and better oversight over the functioning of the executive. This function is difficult to perform by the whole house of the Parliament. It hardly needs emphasis that the work of the Parliament has increased manifold over the years. In this case the disposal of business and effective discharge of responsibilities become difficult. The two key functions of the Parliament relating to law making and securing executive accountability is somehow constrained by the paucity of time available in the Parliament for transacting business of this nature. Obviously in this case the Parliamentary Committees assume importance as the Parliament can discharge its function with the help of the Parliamentary Committees.
The functions of the Parliamentary Committees become important for both the reasons of ensuring executive responsibility and scrutiny of the legislative proposals. The Parliamentary Committees make it possible to scrutinise the legislative proposals in a more detailed and serious manner. It also becomes possible to ensure executive accountability and keep vigil on the functioning of the government. It does not, however, imply interference of the Committees in the day to day functioning of the administration. The functional responsibilities of the Committees are concerned mainly about the broad issues of the governmental policies, programmes and their implementation. Different Parliamentary Committees make it possible to have Parliamentary control over executive in these matters. Since Parliamentary Committees are representative body of the Parliament, they enjoy greater degree of legitimacy. Observations and recommendations of the committees are not taken as party position. The decisions arrived in the committees are collective decisions and above the party lines. Moreover, the deliberation in the Committee may not be strictly on party lines. Members of the Committees belonging to different parties get opportunity to express their concern in more objective and informed manner. It is also important to reiterate that many issues may not be deliberated in the House of the Parliament in the same manner and with same amount of seriousness as they are discussed and deliberated in the Committee. The committees follow a broader consultation process in which non-state actors and public at large get opportunity to express opinion on the issues of concerns. This is made possible by inviting opinion, memorandum, evidence and discussion with the public at large. Obviously the non member of the Parliament and Committees also get opportunities to participate in
one way or the other in the deliberation on the relevant issues. This is not possible in case it is done in the House of the Parliament.

The Committees enjoy greater degree of legitimacy given the nature of their composition. As it has pointed out in previous chapter that parliamentary committees are represented by the different parties in proportion to their strength in the Parliament, it is considered to be representative body of the Parliament in its miniature form. This is one of the important reasons that the number of committees in Parliament has increased over the years. A large number of parliamentary committees with their own area of functional responsibilities are at work. The introduction of Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs) in 1993 marked a major development in the history of parliamentary institutions in post-independent India. These committees were created with twin objectives of facilitating effective control of the Parliament over the executive in terms of ensuring accountability and administrative efficiency of the system; and effective scrutiny of legislative proposals. Within a short span of time the DRSCs registered its presence and established its credentials as important institutional mechanism of the parliament. The restructuring of the committee system and increase in the number of Departmentally Related Standing Committees in 2004 is an attestation of this assertion. Though the Financial Committee System has been working for quite some time, having its roots even during the colonial system, the number and scope of parliamentary committee in India has substantially increased with the introduction of DRSCs. Each of the parliamentary committees has its own well defined functions and area of operation.
A cursory glance over the working of the parliamentary standing committees in India signifies their role in enhancing democratic base of governance, especially on the parameters of transparency and accountability. Exposition especially to two types of parliamentary committees—Financial Committees and Departmentally Related Standing Committees in previous chapters unequivocally establishes their relevance. If the financial committees of the Parliament have ensured financial accountability at different points of time on crucial issues of concern, the Departmentally Related Standing Committees, created for the first time in 1993 and restructured in 2004, have instrumental in ensuring governmental accountability to the Parliament despite their inbuilt limitations. In generic terms, the performance of the DRSCs during the last two decades has been reasonably well despite few limitations and gap between the expected role and actual performance. This is not just a statement but based on the empirical findings emerging out of the analysis of Reports of the committees. An evaluation of the working of DRSCs shows that they have created positive impact on the efficient discharge of responsibilities of the Parliament. Recommendations of the DRSCs have impacted the policies of government at different stages. So far the performance of the Committees in terms of their working is concerned; the available data shows that they have done considerable work since their inception. This point gets substantiated if we make analysis of the impact of the committee observations and recommendations on policy governance. There are the different dimensions and parameters of evaluating the working of the DRSCs. Some of them include: number of Reports presented, number of sittings held, number of recommendations made by the committees, number of recommendations accepted by
the government. Measuring the working of the committees on these counts may not appear very encouraging but these measures cannot be considered as terminal points. There could be many ways of looking at the state of working of the Committees. The preceding chapters have made attempt to evaluate the working of the committee on cumulative index which does not restrict only to the above mentioned parameters but also combines the deliberation of the committee on crucial issues of concern. It is also important to note that the committees have proved their effectiveness in numerous ways. A critical analysis of the Reports of the committees presented to the House over the years shows that the observations/recommendations of the committees have far reaching impact in influencing the policies and programmes of the government.

**Generic Findings on the Working of the Departmentally Related Standing Committee**

It is evident from the study and analysis of the chapter II that DRSCs have done considerable work. Just to recapitulate the generic findings included in the above mentioned chapter, the DRSCs of the Rajya Sabha had presented 707 reports to the Parliament during the period from 8 April 1993 to 31 December 2004. Of these, 310 were reports on Demand for Grants, 105 on Bills, 6 on Policies and 143 on Annual Reports/Subjects. Besides, 143 Action Taken Reports were presented. During the period 8 April 1993 to 6 February 2004, the DRSCs of the Lok Sabha submitted a total of 984 Reports. Of these, 321 were reports on Demand for Grants, 87 on Bills 4 on Policies and 142 on Annual Reports/Subjects. Besides, 430 Action Taken Reports
were presented. Similarly, the DRSCs of the Lok Sabha presented 975 reports during the period 2004-2009. Of these 349 were the original reports and 626 Action Taken Reports. The presentation of a large number of Action Taken Reports is itself a positive indication of the working of the Committees.

Similarly, the recommendations of the committees are also important. In-depth analysis of the Reports of the DRSCs of the Lok Sabha, which is otherwise not the exclusive concern of the present study, shows that more than fifty percent of the recommendations made by the Committees have been accepted by the government in the past. This is itself an indicator of their success. It may be further recalled that the DRSCs in India are Parliamentary institution with merely recommendatory power; their recommendations are not binding on the government. If majority of the recommendations of the committees are accepted by the government, it is significant achievement of the committee system in general and DRSCs in particular.

**Research Findings of the Present Study**

There are varying perceptions about the working of the parliamentary standing committees in India. Some may take the view that the parliamentary standing committees in India are suffer from lacuna of deficient working on number of grounds- varying from the issue of power and competence of the committees to their actual working at the operational level. Others view the role and working of the committees in a more positive manner. The present work attempted to come to both the perspectives. Some basic questions were posed and answers sought in the light of available data to critically examine the issue. Besides others some of the questions include the following: Are the committees constrained by the limitation of their
competence? Do the members of the committee take interest in the work of the committee? Do they attend the meeting regularly? What is the contribution of the committee in the entire process of deliberation in the committee? Are the recommendations of the committees taken into consideration by the government in policy and governance? In case of non acceptance of the recommendations/observations of the committee what is the option left with the committee to deal with the government? These questions raised relate directly to the role and competence of the parliamentary committees in India. Attempts were made to provide answer to some of the generic questions in the previous chapters of the work.

The present study exclusively examined the working of the parliamentary standing committee, besides others, on the following parameters: attendance of members in the meetings of the committee; frequency of the meetings; and observation and recommendations of the committees. Recommendations and observations of the committees have been examined at two levels. At the first level attempt has been made to draw broad conclusions on the basis of analysis of the number of observations/recommendations made and number of recommendations accepted by the government. It also mapped out the nature of observations and recommendations of the committees as recorded in the Reports at the second level. The second level analysis primarily attempts to unravel deliberations in the committee on specific issues. The role and effectiveness are the two critical dimensions of understanding the working of the committees in the present study. These two critical dimensions have been articulated in chapters- Chapter II and Chapters III. These two chapters cover Departmentally Related Committee on Health and Family Welfare; and
Departmentally Related Committee on Human Resource Development. These two exclusive chapters help in ascertaining the role of the DRSC in securing governmental accountability and its role and contribution in legislative process respectively.

**Attendance of Members**

Attendance of the members in the meetings of the committee is cause of serious worry. Generally this is a held view that the members of the Committee do not attend the meetings of the Committee regularly. A cursory glance over the Reports of the committee endorses the view. In case of the two DRSCs selected for the present study attendance of the members is certainly an issue. Analysis of the select Reports of the Departmentally Related Committee on Human Resource Development for the purpose of ascertaining their role in examination of legislative proposals suggests that in this case attendance of members in the meetings is not alarming. On average, the attendance of the members is not below sixty percent. Out of sixteen meetings held on different bills, it is only one meeting in which the attendance is dismally low amounting to only thirty five percent In three meetings the attendance is just below fifty percent. In other cases the attendance percentage appears to be reasonable.

The findings are different in the case of Departmentally Related Committee on Health and Family Welfare covered under the study in Chapter-III. Though no generalization can be made on the basis of select Reports of the committee, it indicates a general trend. Attendance of the members in the meetings of the committee in twenty one Reports selected for the study and analysis in Chapter III is alarmingly low. It was only in five cases out of twenty one that the attendance of the
members crossed fifty percent. In no case attendance of the members reached even the level of three fourth of the total membership of the committee. Out of thirty two meetings there are only two occasions wherein attendance of the members crossed sixty percent. In fifteen meetings the attendance of the members was below forty percent.

If this is the status of attendance of the members in meetings of the committee it calls for serious churning of the process and pattern of membership in the committees. There could be two plausible reasons for the low attendance of the members; either members do not take the work of the committee seriously or they do not have interest in the works of the committees. Ideally a member of the committee should have reasonable expertise and experience in area of concern of the committee. However, there is hardly a match between expertise required for the effective discharge of responsibilities and the mode of appointment and pattern of membership of the committee. Obviously in this case very few members actively participate in the meetings of the committee and contribute in the deliberation in the committee.

**Frequency of the Meetings**

Analysis of select Reports covered in Chapters III and IV clearly established that the frequency of the meetings of the committees was not very encouraging in both the cases. In case of Chapter III the analysis all the Reports selected none of the meetings of the committee exceed two in case of original reports and one in case of Action Taken Reports. The business of the committee was disposed off within two meetings in the first case and one in the second case. Nearly similar is the case in the meetings relating to legislative process barring few exceptions.
Given the nature of work and wide range of issues for discussion the frequency of the meeting appears to be inappropriate. How does the committee dispose off the business related to Demand for Grants in just two meetings is a question that needs further exploration. So far as the meeting of the committee on Action Taken Report is concerned, it is evident from the above table that meeting has been invariably confined to one. In case Action Taken Report even the duration of the meeting is alarmingly short.

One of the major points in relation to the functioning of the Committee is inadequate number of meetings held. A cursory glance at the Reports of the DRSCs other than the selected ones for study indicates this aspect. The number of meetings to transact the business of the Committee is inextricably linked to the effective functioning of the Committee. It hardly needs additional emphasis that in-depth examination and serious deliberations cannot be done merely in one or two meetings. Exception could be there wherein the well informed members may meaningfully deliberate on an issue and arrive at consensus within a very short span of meeting in the Committee.

Given the context and the pattern of membership of the Committees it is very unlikely to transact business of the Committee, especially relating to legislative proposals, within a very brief meeting of the Committee- both in terms of number and duration of the meetings.

**Observations and Recommendations of the Committees**

Evaluation of the working of the committees is also done on the basis of analysis of the recommendations and observations made and acceptance of such recommendations by the government. There are two different ways of looking at the
recommendations of the committee- quantitative and qualitative. In the first case the quantitative value is assigned to the recommendation in adjudging the status and effectiveness of the committee. The number of recommendations of the committee and their acceptance by the government is causally linked to the effective functioning of the committee. The match/ mismatch between the recommendations made and recommendations accepted is, of course, important indicator of the working of the committee but not the sufficient basis. The present study establishes the point that qualitative dimensions of observations and recommendations are crucially important. In- depth analysis of the recommendations suggests that a more nuanced understanding of the recommendation/observations is called for. The whole evaluation should not be simply reduced to quantitative calculation of acceptance and non-acceptance. The analysis included in both the chapters establish this point.

Moreover, there could be numerous factors relating to acceptance/ non- acceptance of observations/ recommendations of the committee. The Chapter-IV relating to the role of the committee in legislative proposals makes the point. A cursory glance over the recommendations of the Committee shows that the acceptance of the recommendations of the Committees has not been very encouraging. There could be many reasons for non acceptance of particular recommendation but one of the reasons of non- acceptance is the issue of constitutionality and legality of recommendations. This becomes more apparent from the analysis of the observations and recommendations by the committee on selected bills. The analysis of bills referred to the committee reveals that that most of the recommendations which were not accepted and incorporated in Acts were either in the form of opinion and
observation or part of the detailed rules which follow to Act. It is important to
mention in this regard that some of the recommendations made by the Committee
lacked the needed background or the legal expertise.

The qualitative dimension of the recommendations is important pointer of the value
of the recommendations. Analysis of five bills in the Chapter IV clearly attests this
point.

The recommendations and observations made by the committee in case of Demand
for Grants are equally important. Even in this case the number of acceptance of
recommendations is not very high. However, it should not interpreted mechanically.

It has been pointed out in chapter-III that some of the observations/recommendations
made by the committee might not be effected immediately due to
variety of constraints. Despite the fact of low acceptance of
observations/recommendations of the committee, they are important. The Action
Taken Report of the committee presented to the Houses also act as a mechanism of
fixing responsibility of non performance/under performance/deficient performance
of the ministry/department concerned. The minister of the concerned ministry is
answerable to the House. This could be one of the ways of securing accountability of
the government to the parliament. The concerned ministry is answerable to its non
performance. Obviously the concerned ministry department attempt to take
corrective measures or comply to the observations and recommendations of the
committee. Even in those cases where the observations/recommendations of the
committee are not accepted or effected to by the government, they serve as guide for
policy making and governance in the future. In this regard it needs to be reiterated
that the status and role of the parliamentary committees in India have been conceived as persuasive and advisory one unlike in many other countries wherein recommendations of the committee have binding mandate. Despite these limitations the committees in India have played very important role in the whole process of policy and governance besides playing a role of securing governmental accountability.

It is interesting to note that the DRSCs in India substantially influence the public policies and fix up the accountability of the concerned ministry and departments through their reports on Demands for Grants, review of annual reports of the ministries/departments and examination of long term policy documents. Despite the fact that the DRSCs in India have only recommendatory power and not the binding power related to their recommendations, they have substantially made their presence felt in influencing the policies of the government and in making them accountable to the parliament during the last two decades of their existence.

**Suggestions for Strengthening the Role if the DRSCs**

i) The attendance and meaningful participation of the members in the transaction of the business of the Committee is a requisite for effective functioning.

ii) Frequency and duration of the meetings need to be enhanced otherwise the business of the Committee would not be transacted in a meaningful way.

iii) Help of legal/subject experts is required in the Committee. This will prevent the committee from making erroneous observations and recommendations. This will result into greater acceptance of recommendations.

iv) Maximum attempt should be made to match the expertise of the members and requirement of the committee in the process of appointment of membership of the committee.