CHAPTER - VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION
In a civil society the importance of decentralization in democratic polity is presented to make the free citizens active participants in the formulation, execution and implementation of various rules of law for the betterment of individuals, community and the society at large. By decentralization one means the layering of government and power in such a way that power finally rests with individual members of the society and the various levels of government are interrelated in such a way that each level is bound by norms of accountability.

Panchayati Raj institutions and concept of decentralisation remains a live issue even after about six decades of independence. Successive Indian Governments emphasize the role of these institutions. The emphasis on Panchayati Raj Institutions even by Mahatma Gandhi, centres around the basic agrarian character of the Indian economy, where village is an important unit of social organization. Even in ancient times the concept of “Panchaparameswar” signifies the role of village bodies in village social life. Even Gandhiji once observed “if there is any meaning of home rule for the people of India, Grama Panchayat will have to be given the status of a prime institution.” He also visualized this institution as an instrument of mass politics.

To U. N. Dhebar, Panchayats represent features of a village republic and are the learning ground for democracy. There is no
substitute for this institution with regard to rural development. The Planning Commission formed in 1950, emphasized the need for development of rural areas and in later years ‘Grama Swaraj’ became the slogan of “Sarvodaya Movement” of Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan.

The Community development programmes launched in 1952 recommended the introduction of Panchayatati Raj system in the country. It anticipated a linkage between local leadership enjoying confidence of the local people and government. Balwant Ray Mehta Committee (1957) suggested for a three-tier system of rural local government. These tiers were Grama Panchayats at village level, Panchayat Samiti at Block level and Zilla Parisad at District level.

Ashok Mehta Committee was set up to study the working of the Panchayati Raj System and to make recommendations for its betterment. The report in 1978 observed limited representation by Women and Backward Communities in the PR system. The report also observed acute deficiency in finance at their disposal and limited powers. The Committee recommended that all developmental functions should be placed under the Zilla Parisad. In addition the Zilla Parisad should handle all the centralised functions. It also recommended representation of SC/ST in proportion to their population, adequate financial power to generate resources through levies and participation in developmental activities in the region in the areas of agriculture forestry, cottage industries and welfare activities.
G.V.R. Rao Committee set up in 1985 opined that democratic decentralization of developmental function should be considered as the first step towards District government.

Somgvi Committee (1986) observed that Panchayati Raj institutions should be closely involved in planning and implementation of rural development programmes at lower level. It also opined that Panchayati Raj institutions should be constitutionally declared as third tier of the government. Sarkaria Commission recommended that these institutions should be strengthened financially and functionally. Dantwala Committee (1977) and the Working group of District Planning (1982) were of the opinion that democratic decentralization of power to the people requires active participation and co-operation of people.

In September 1991, the Congress government introduced the 72\textsuperscript{nd} (Pancayats) and 73\textsuperscript{rd} (Nagarpalikas) Constituently Amendment Bills. These two Bills were referred to a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament. The Lok Sabha passed the two Bills, their sequence changed to 73\textsuperscript{rd} and 74\textsuperscript{th} respectively. Following their ratification by more than half the state assemblies, the President gave his assent on 20\textsuperscript{th} April 1993 and came into existence as the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act 1992 on 24\textsuperscript{th} April 1993 and Constitution (Seventy-fourth Amendment) Act on 1992 on 1\textsuperscript{st} June 1993. These two Constitution Amendments brought about a fundamental change not only in the realm of local self-government but also in India’s federal character.

First, the democratic base of the Indian polity has widened. Before the Amendments, our democratic structure through elected representatives was restricted to the two Houses of Parliament, 25
States Assemblies and two Assemblies of Union territories (Delhi and Pondichery) and all of them had just 4,963 elected members. Now there are more than 500 district Panchayats, about 6000 Block/Tahsil/Mandal Panchayats at the intermediate level and 250,000 Gram Panchayats in rural India where about 73 per cent of India’s population lives. Today, in every five years, about 30 lakh (3 million) representatives are elected by the people through the democratic process, out of whom 10 lakh (one million) are women. Women had about 175 district Panchayats and about 85,000 gram Panchayats. Likewise, more than 30 city corporations and about 600 town Municipalities have women Chairpersons. A large number of excluded group and communities are now included in the decision-making bodies.

Chapter-II presents the review of a selected number of work of the vast literature available. The review has been attempted to introduce the concept of decentralization and its relevance in the democratic set-up and growth of ideas of local governance. Some studies have been reviewed to establish Panchayat Raj system and Rural development programmes. A number of studies have been highlighted to study the interrelationships between women empowerment and growth of local governance and panchay raj system. Some studies have similarly been reviewed to present findings of empirical work studying the growth and functioning of panchayat raj system in different parts of the country.

Chapter-III presents analysis of the evolution of the Panchayat Raj System in India as well as in the State of Orissa. It highlighted the contributions of Balwantrai Committee (1957), Ashok
Mehta Committee (1977) in shaping the growth of Panchayat raj System. But there was no constitutional support for self-government below the state level till April 1993, and no state government has ever taken it seriously. In September 1991, the Congress government introduced the 72nd (Pancayats) and 73rd (Nagarpalikas) Constituently Amendment Bills. These two Bills were referred to a Joint Select Committee of the Parliament. The Lok Sabha passed the two Bills, their sequence changed to 73rd and 74th respectively. Following their ratification by more than half the state assemblies, the President gave his assent on 20th April 1993 and came into existence as the Constitution (Seventy-third Amendment) Act 1992 on 24th April 1993 and Constitution (Seventy-fourth Amendment) Act on 1992 on 1st June 1993. These two Constitution Amendments brought about a fundamental change not only in the realm of local self-government but also in India's federal character. This Chapter also presents important features of 73rd Amendment Act such as functions of the Gram panchayats, Women’s leadership, extension to schedule areas, State Finance Commission, District Planning Committees, Gram Sabha, and significance of Social Audit. The Chapter also presents the history of Panchayat raj institutions evolution in Orissa with special reference to 73rd Constitutional amendment.

Chapter-IV presents an analysis of socio-economic profile of the district under study from which the two panchayats were selected for indepth study. The district located in Western Orissa has one tract receiving irrigation from Hirakud Dam and another tract representing the unirrigated area. As per the Orissa Human Development Report, 2004; the value of HDI during 2001 for Sonepur district turns out to be 0.566 which is lower than the state HDI value of 0.579. Of the three
components of HDI of Sonepur district, the Education index has the highest weight (0.731) where as the health index has the lowest weight (0.474) and the income index (0.492) lies in between. Among the 30 district of Orissa, Sonepur district occupies 16th rank in terms of HDI ranking. The value of GDI (Gender Development Index) for Sonepur district is 0.543 which is nearly equal to State GDI value. The equally distributed education index (0.715) has greater weightage than equally distributed health index (0.474) and equally distributed income index (0.441). Both HDI & GDI are based on the same basic parameters and GDI value is always lesser than the HDI value. Sonepur district occupies 11th rank with medium range of GDI value. The value of RHI (Reproductive Health Index) for Sonepur district is 0.592, which is higher than the State RHI value (0.549). The district occupies 7th rank of RHI value. The inter-district disparity in RHI value is high. This is due to bunching of as many as 20 districts with RHI values (lying between 10.5 and 0.6) around the state mean RHI value (0.550).

The two panchayats of Sonepur district selected for present study are Mayabarha in Dungiripali block representing the Irrigated Panchayat and the other Bishimunda panchayat under Sonepur Block representing the unirrigated panchayat. The Chapter also presented the general profile of the two panchayats, panchayat functionaries and important aspects of the Panchayat. It is observed that the available funds in both the panchayats are too meager to initiate any development process in the panchayat. The per capita panchayat income during 5 years stands at Rs.391.5, which is marginally higher than the irrigated panchayat.
The Chapter also presented a profile of the villages under the two Panchayats. It is interesting to observe that female ward members are found only in four (out of 8 villages) villages in the irrigated panchayat compared to only in two villages (out of 9) in unirrigated panchayat. In none of the villages the Panchayats have control over land and forest resources and there have been no development of water resources for generation of panchayat income and indicating limited resource base and dependence on Government source for any developmental work, which is also very meager at the present.

Chapter-V presents a comparative analysis of the two panchayats through responses of the sample households and panchayat functionaries. The land size group-wise distribution of sample households indicate relatively higher proportion of landless in unirrigated compared to the irrigated panchayat. The dominant section of the sample households belonged to land-size group of 0.1 to 2 acres. Relatively higher proportion of sample households are placed in size group 2.1 to 5 acres in irrigated compared to unirrigated panchayat. However the proportion of cultivators belonging to higher size groups are relatively more in irrigated compared to unirrigated panchayat.

The caste group wise distribution on the other hand indicates that while the dominant caste in irrigated panchayat is SC, the dominant caste in case of unirrigated Panchayat is General Caste. The proportion of ST in total sample households is also relatively more in case of irrigated Panchayat.

The occupation group-wise distribution indicates the dominant occupation group among sample households is Cultivator in
both the Panchayats. While the proportion of Agricultural labour is relatively less in the irrigated panchayat, there is no representation of service class among the sample households in unirrigated panchayat. The proportion belonging to services class or business group is relatively less in both the Panchayats.

An attempt has been made in this chapter to present the awareness of the sample households about own family, problems in the village, about national and state politics and knowledge about operation of the Panchayat.

The questions related to awareness of problems of one's own family are sufficiency of income, sufficiency of land ownership, opportunities for education of children, availability of medical facilities, and association of member of the family in active politics, association of any member with religious activity, any member working outside the village, present position compared to parental position, possession of modern gadgets, beneficiary of any govt. programme and main problems faced by the family.

The questions related to awareness about the village are well being of the village, social harmony in the village, caste problem, cultural activity, economic exploitation, land inequality, educational institution, differential party affiliation, attention from Govt. official, visit of Govt. officials to the village, main problems of the village, important activities of panchayat in the village, expectation from the panchayat, expectation from the govt. method of developing the village, system of mutual help present in the village, role of panchayat in the development and existence of Common village resources.
The questions related to awareness about the village are knowledge about the Chief Minister, Prime Minister, the party that can solve the problems of the village, policies of present governments, how to make India to grow and what are the main problems of the country.

The questions related to awareness about the village are knowledge about Sarapanch of the village, formation and election of the panchayat, involvement in the panchayat election, role of sarpanch, role of ward members, problems during panchayat election, present programmes of the panchayat, constraints faced by the panchayat, how to make panchayat effective, effectiveness of women members of the panchayat, reservation policy in panchayat election, privileges of panchayat functionaries, resources under the control of the panchayat, management of the resources and activities taken up by the panchayat.

It is noticed that there is not much of difference in the responses regarding knowledge about own family in both the panchayats. but the responses are significantly different in both the panchayats in terms of knowledge about the village. The sample households seem to be more conscious about the events in the village compared to the unirrigated panchayat. However responses are significantly not different in both the panchayats in terms of knowledge about State and National politics. But the responses are significantly different in both the panchayats in case of knowledge about the operation of Panchayats. The sample households seem to be more conscious about the functioning of the panchayat compared to the unirrigated panchayat.

The perceptions of the panchayat functionaries have been analysed on the basis of information on party affiliation, awareness
about the role of panchayats, constraints faced by the panchayats and suggestions for the improvement of the Panchayat raj system. It is observed that the functionaries of the Irrigated panchayat are relatively more conscious about the functioning of the panchayat and the role played by the functionaries compared to the unirrigated panchayat.

In the context of above findings and the role played by panchayat institutions one can find problems in the process of democratization and process of decentralization it self. The democratic form of government and democratic polity in the Indian context has its origin in the Colonial India through British intervention in the erstwhile feudal system possessing pre-capitalist economy, peasant society, feudal rule, traditional educational system and traditional social values. The experience of the presently developed Capitalist West is the evolution/establishment of market economy, democratic set up, modern educational system and modern social values which witnessed dissolution/ displacement of traditional pre-capitalist system ( feudal order) both in form and essence. In contrast the Indian Society witnessed at the advent of political independence co-existence of both capitalist and pre-capitalist order, thereby making the form of government- a democratic one but the essence remained a queer combination of both the systems. To the extent the capitalist order was introduced from above by British who had an imperial interest in the Indian Society, the essence of governance remained colonial in nature. To the extent the Colonial Power collaborated with the feudal order (though in rare instances liquidated it) the essence of governance also contained elements of feudalism. The reflection of this phenomenon is observable at the level of economy, polity, social system, social values. The Indian
society thus witnessed a dual system in which feudals were abolished but not feudalism, imperials were rooted out but not imperialism and capital existed and grew out but not capitalism.

In the context of such a process of transition, there existed one way flow of governance from top to bottom, a characteristic of the feudal colonial system. People become necessary for the continuance of the political system, they are integral part of the system for exercising franchise and electing governments but in the perspective of development and governance the central position is not occupied by the interest and needs of the people. It is determined from above. The process of planning is based on vested interests of restructured feudals and capitalists and is essentially a material planning rather than planning for vast majority of labouring human beings. The planning seldom resulted in the empowerment of weaker sections of the society in terms of enhancement of access to material resources.

The response of the people varied depending on the varying level of awareness which they acquired in the process of transition of the society from a colonial feudal set up to a set up based on democratic form but neo-colonial and semi-feudal in content. The level of awareness of the people, an essential ingredient for democratization, can be broadly found to be a differentiated one and can be categorized as follows.

1. The lowest level of awareness where an individual is not aware of the happenings outside his family and the various relationships existing in his surrounding and the society at large.
2. The level of awareness where-in an individual is aware of the relationships around his surrounding but not aware of the broad relationships in the society at large.

3. The level of awareness where, an individual is aware of the surrounding and society at large but with no idea as to how to act to change the surrounding.

4. The level of awareness where in an individual is aware of the surrounding and society at large and participates in changing the surrounding.

In the Indian context in general and Orissa in particular vast majority seem to be belonging to the first and second category. To that extent they become mute and passive participants in the form of governance and provide continuity to the model of democracy which is based on centralized form of governance and the nature of decentralization among the various levels of governance is only in form but not in essence.