CHAPTER – 6
CONCLUSION

In the preceding Chapters an attempt has been made to discuss the emergence of rural leadership among the plains tribes of Lakhimpur district with special reference to the three plains tribes - Mishing inhabited in Ahomoni, Sonowal Kachari inhabited in Gagaldubi and Deoris inhabited in Kinapathar. At this stage would be pertinent to draw certain conclusion from this study of the emergence of rural leadership among the plains tribes of Lakhimpur district.

The study of socio-economic and political background of the tribal leadership in the three plains tribes communities helped us in understanding the influence of the environmental factors on the working of the leadership in the village administration. The socio-economic and political changes that have taken place in the three villages – Kinapathar village inhabited by the Deori, Gagaldubi village inhabited by the Sonowal Kachari, and Ahomoni village inhabited by the Mishing respectively are found to influence the pattern and style of the leadership of the three villages. The study reveals that the leadership of the three villages represents different socio-economic and political interest. They differ in their age, education, economic status, political awareness and political affiliation.

The study on socio-economic and political profiles of the tribal leaders at village level, reveals that the educated young and middle age group leaders
dominate in the power structure of the village, although the aged traditional leaders continued with their hold in various social activities. The main findings of the Chapter are – the representation of women in the leadership is negligible, leadership seems to be totally a male affair, representation of the women in the traditional leadership is almost nil while there is representation of women in modern leadership though the number is negligible, a majority of the leaders belong to upper income background, the lower income background of leadership is also found to increase but the middle income background was declined and overwhelming majority of leadership are engaged in agricultural pursuits followed by business and industries as occupational category.

A study of the socio-economic and political background of the leadership of the three plains tribes communities – Deori, Sonowal Kachari and Mishing in the context of the three villages Kinapathar, Gagaldubi and Ahomoni indicates that there have been significant changes in the composition of the leadership in the three plains tribes communities. From the findings mentioned above it can very well be concluded that the traditional leadership among plains tribes is in the process of losing their ground giving way to young, secular, educated and aspiring new leaders.

The analysis of socio-economic and political background of the leaders in the three villages among the three plains tribes communities is almost a prerequisite to a meaningful understanding of the nature and structure of leadership. An understanding of the socio-economic conditions the men hail from
is essential to any systematic analysis of social change and mobility. Socio-economic and political background is more important and significant in the context of the leadership because it does not only decide the *ascriptive* status, style of life, social position values and aspirations but also the capacity of leaders to sustain struggle for power and authority. From the study, it may be concluded that in ascription oriented society as tribal society is, the social existence of the individual becomes all the more significant in nature and structure of leadership. Against the background of the findings of the socio-economic and political nature of the plains tribes leadership in rural society it can be very well summarized that the traditional leadership among plains tribes is on decline giving way to young, secular, educated and aspiring leaders having political linkage with the political parties.

In dealing with the emerging pattern and style of rural leadership in Chapter-3 of the present study, it is found that the style of new leadership developed after the introduction of PRIs is qualitatively different from the traditional leadership. The study reveals that the traditional leadership is undergoing a change and new pattern of leadership is emerging of the scene. The study further reveals that the style of new leadership is opposed to the traditional leadership style. While exercising control is the key factor of the traditional leadership style, influence is the key factor of new leadership style. A traditional leader needs authority while a new leader needs consensus in making major decisions. A traditional leader discourages conflict and contradiction while a new leader encourages conflicts and contradictions. A modern leader believes in
transparent administration but a traditional leader does not follow transparency. A new leader emphasizes changes and reformations through application of new skill and technology but a traditional leader gives importance to acquiring new skill and experience.

The emergence of modern leaders among the Deori, Sonowal Kachari and Mishing communities is due to the cohesive situations provided by the protective discrimination and the government policy of development. In the ultimate analysis, it can be said that the traditional leaders are being challenged by the newly emerging leaders with new style of operation and in the process of transformation the traditional leaders are losing their ground.

Another significant finding of the present Chapter is that the emergence of modern leaders in the plains tribes society and speedy change in their role perception, attitude and values indicates the breakup or the disintegration of the indigenous tribal society. The contribution of newly emerged tribal leaders has its importance to bring the plains tribes people in to the mainstream of national politics.

The emerging pattern and style of leadership in tribal rural communities or in tribal villages is somewhat different from the pattern of emerging leadership in a non-tribal society. It is all due to difference in socio-economic setting, culture, mentality, degree of awareness, level of education, communication facilities and social contract.
The emerging pattern and style of leadership in a tribal society in the context of the three communities – Mishing, Sonowal Kachari and Deoris reveals that there is change in the attitudes of traditional leadership and that of traditional leadership is gradually receding in the background and the modern leadership of young and middle age group with average literacy levels are taking the place of traditional leadership operating with new style and behaviour.

Another interesting finding is that even after the introduction of 73rd Amendment Acts, 1992 with the emergence of a new type of leadership in the form of women and Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the traditional leadership still retains a substantial part of the social and political power of the village level in a tribal society. Thus, the emerging pattern and style of leadership in tribal society reveals that the traditional leadership is gradually receding in the background and the proportion of increase in number of leadership in lower classes, is higher in comparison to that of upper classes. The study also reveals that the traditional leadership is still continuing parallel to new leadership with some changes in their power structure.

The present study reveals that there has been considerable change in the attitudes and perceptions of the leaders in a tribal society. During the time of interview it is found that their opinion on some important customary practices and other social issues like inter-tribal marriage, status and role of women etc. reflected a positive change in the attitude and perceptions of the leaders. Further, the present study reveals that the modern leaders are comparatively more progressive in their
outlook than the traditional leaders. The analysis of the leaders’ response to the
questions regarding the present status of the traditional institutions (Gaonburhas)
reveals that the popularity and influence of the traditional institutions especially the
Gaonburhas have decreased to some extent.

In dealing with the impact of new leadership upon the power and position
of the traditional leadership in a tribal society, it is found that the traditional village
leaders played a dominating role in the village administration since long past. The
emergence of new leadership has some impact on the traditional village institution
as well as the village administration. The emergence of the youth leaders in a tribal
society clearly shows that even within a tradition oriented framework, there is
scope for both flexibility and innovative behaviour. In the present study it has been
found that the Gaonburhas of the three villages – Kinapathar, Gagaldubi and
Ahomoni expressed their opinion during the time of interview that they generally
donot oppose to any change in the society which will not directly contradicts with
the existing custom. The traditional leaders are aware that as a result of the changes
in the society they too have to change their attitude and behaviour. Thus, the new
leaders have to play a challenging role to see that socio-economic and political
changes are proposed in such a way that their distinctive tribal identity is not
undermind.

The study on the impact of new leadership upon the power and position of
the traditional leadership reveals that the introduction of PRIs more particularly
after the introduction of new PRIs as per 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act has
far-reaching impact on the village administration of the three villages and the traditional institutions Gaonburhas. It has changed the socio-political outlook of the rural leaders and also of the villagers. During the time of interview and also from participant observation, it is found that a modernizing effect on traditional institutions of the three villages has been taken place.

Another interesting finding of the present Chapter is that in a tribal society the ascriptive factor is more influential than the acquisitive factor as one assumed before the study. The Chapter arrives at a conclusion that even in a tribal society due to socio-economic transformation as a result of introduction of PRIs the acquisitive factor has become more influential in the emergence of modern leadership. The finding also acknowledges the finding of the research work conducted on rural leadership by K.S. Bhatt in his work *Emerging Pattern of Leadership in Panchyati Raj setup in Mysore State*.

The study also reveals that any conflicting situation that arises between modern and traditional power structure has been resolved through a peaceful re-adjustment. The study also acknowledges the finding of leadership study by different scholars that due to impact of new power structure and new leadership, the power and status of the traditional leadership has been eroded to some extent. The present study arrives at a conclusion that the modern leaders are more concerned with socio-economic development of the village while the traditional leaders are concerned with matters of different social activities like social festivals, rituals etc. Thus, the assumption that after the emergence of the modern leaders
due to introduction of PRIs, there took place a conflict between the traditional power structure and modern power structure in a tribal society has no validity.

In Chapter – 5, the analysis of the pattern of political linkage and their instrumental uses brings out some interesting aspects of leadership behaviour. It has been seen that almost all the leaders particularly the modern leaders identify themselves with one political party or the other. It is interesting to note that the formal PRI leaders identified themselves with ruling political party. This becomes self evident when one finds that the congress overwhelmingly dominates the list of political parties preferred by the leadership as well as by citizens. Another interesting finding is that while developing political linkages with higher level leadership, the rural leadership would concentrate on those who belong to Congress. As it is seen, in the present study of instrumental uses of political links, party leaders, particularly ministers hailing from the constituency concerned, prove quite helpful in getting work done at district and state levels.

Another interesting finding of the present study is that while a large number of members of the rural leadership are eager to extend support in elections to those belonging to the ruling party, the higher level functionaries, in turn, extend, patronage in individual and collective form. Another important point to be noted is that in the development of political links, political factors are considered more effective than the social factors. Responses also show that factors such as being co-worker of a political party, membership of same institutions or acquaintance earned during election campaign are more helpful in developing political links
with both higher level leaders than social factors like, friends, relations and the like.

In fine, it may be observed that there exists a gap between theory and practice of the operation of rural leadership that emerged after the introduction of PRIs and more particularly after the implementation of the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994 based on 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992. Theoretically, democratization and decentralization sound alright but their practice at the village level is not a reality as yet. Under the Assam Panchayat Act, 1994, a democratic leadership has emerged in Assam which has been broad-based to a great extent. The rural leadership has by and large clearly perceived of their role in realizing the objectives of PRIs but due to a number of constraints the performance is not quite satisfactory. In this regard, the traditional rural leadership, the village Headman particularly in a tribal society have to limit their authority within socio-religious matters rather than village developmental activities. From the whole range of study it may be concluded that the emerging pattern of leadership at the grass-roots level as a result of introduction of PRIs in the plains tribes rural areas is qualitatively different from the traditional leadership.