Chapter - VII

Conclusion

We began our work by analyzing the concept of 'Elite' as it had been used over time by various social scientists and concluded that there had hardly been a commonly agreed idea of 'Elite'. The concept of Elite assumed greater heterogeneity of definition rather than conceptual clarity with the passage of time. This was so as the concept was handled by academicians and non-academicians alike. The only common point that came out was the distinction by virtue of higher status, position or some desirable qualities in a qualitative and quantitative dominance. Analysis of social science literature had left us no wiser since the term was loosely used in popular fancy and was open to fraudulent flexibility that partly explained its widespread popularity.

Our survey of the 'Political elite' in India in general and Assam in particular has indicated a likewise loose identification of the concept. We decided upon the
operational definition of Legislative Elite for the purpose of our present study. We defined them as the group of persons holding the positions of Legislators by virtue of their victory in the Assam Assembly election. Every one of them formally represented the electorate of a particular constituency in the Assembly. The entire study primarily focused on "Legislative Elite" as decision-makers in political system. The function of the Legislative Elite was to work for the redressal of the grievances and development of his or her respective constituency and thereby for development of the state as a whole. Thus the focus of our enquiry in this study had been the personality of Legislative Elite in terms of structure, outlook and role perception. While summing up the study of the Political Elites we feel inclined to make certain observation on the basis of our research. These observations could only be presented in the form of hypotheses and broad tentative generalization which still remained to be verified in the context of other states. Yet, certain interesting finding emerged from our study that
helped us in understanding the profile of the political Elite in an integrated fashion.

We found that the Legislators in the 8th Assam Legislative assembly had been a heterogeneous group on many counts. They differed in their age group, education, legislative experience, socialization pattern and so on. The age group represented in the House confirmed the finding that the young political Elite dominated the House. The effective political age in Assam Legislative Assembly was between 20-39. Thus people between 20-39 were generally preferred for the House. 32 members of the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly belonged to the age group 20-29, while 44 members belonged to the age group of 30-39. People over 60 were under-represented in the House and people between 20-39 were heavily over-represented. However, people of 40-49 were also represented although not heavily. Yet the House mostly consisted of the young political Elites.
In terms of other demographic characteristics we find that educationally, the House was dominated overwhelmingly by the Graduates and Post graduate degree holders. The group like Graduates, Post Graduates were fairly represented in the House. Thus, the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly had elitist background from the Point of view of its composition. It became clear that the people were elected mostly from among the educated section of the population. The growing entry of educated people into the Legislature could also be treated as an index of upward social mobility.

With regard to the occupational background of the Legislative Elites of the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly it was found out that most of the legislators did not have specific occupation before their entry into politics. Most of the members of the Assembly indicated ‘Politics’, ‘Social Works’, ‘Upliftment of rural areas’, as their occupation. A number of them were involved in the organizational work of the All Assam Student Union and All Assam Gana Sangram
Parisad. Thus it became difficult to classify the legislators by occupation as many legislators followed more than one occupation.

From historical and sociological perspective, the Eight Assam Legislative Assembly reflected and represented a plural society. We found overwhelming dominance of upper caste in the Assembly. As such it represented the beginning of middle class politics in Assam.

Looked at from the point of view of representation by sex, the number of women legislators in the State Assembly was almost negligible as compared to the number of men legislators. In the 7th Assam Legislative Assembly out of 110 legislators, only two were women legislators. In the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly out of 126 Members only 04 were women legislators. Thus women in the apex decision making body of state political system remained under-represented.

A few Members in the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly had variegated experiences before coming to the
Assembly. They had Political apprenticeship in urban and rural local Government, co-operative societies, university bodies, Party organization and in Legislative bodies. Out of 122 members in the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly only 31 had Legislative and Political experiences. The rest 91 Legislators had no previous legislative experience. As such majority members were almost new faces in the Assembly. Majority of them had no Legislative experience even in grass-root level democratic institution like Panchayat or Municipalities. Most of such new legislators had organizational capacities as they were directly involved in the Assam movement. Thus it was found that the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly consisted of the Legislative elites who had little legislative experience and skill. Such legislative experience showed the parameter of assessing the Legislative role of the ruling class. As such, the Legislative role and behaviour of the Legislators were heavily influenced by their experience. It helped in understanding
the background from which the political class emerged as
decision makers in the society.

An analysis of the question put in the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly showed that most of them related to the matters of their respective constituencies of the legislative elites. The members generally used the Question hour to acquaint the government with the problems of their respective constituencies. However, most of the members lacked procedural knowledge in the conduct of the business, in highlighting the various issues and problems concerning people. Majority of them were, however, unfamiliar, with the procedure and rules of the House because of lack of previous legislative experiences. Absence of knowledge restricted the scope of the legislator in properly focusing the problems and issues of the people. The members in the 8th Assam legislative Assembly had been making extensive use of Questions to redress the grievances of the people.

Members in the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly were found to be interested in putting starred Questions. Asking of
such questions was by no means confined to members of the Opposition but was also extensively used by the members of the Treasury bench. Members were found to be interested in putting Starred Questions as it gave them better opportunity to crossexamine the Ministers by putting supplementries. Most of such questions were asked by the Opposition. Very often, supplementries were put unnecessarily either to dislodge the Government or to attack the Minister politically, sometimes individually.

All the four types of Questions – Starred, Unstarred, Short Notices Questions and supplementries – were asked in the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly. But, the number of Starred Questions, for which notices were given, admitted and answered, were more than the other three categories. This showed the interest of the members in starred questions as it gave them opportunity to the attack Ministers through supplementries.

Another noticeable aspect of the 8th Assam legislative Assembly was that the number of admitted and answered
questions were quite high in case of Unstarred Questions. It showed that the Assam Legislative Assembly was liberal enough to admit Unstarred Questions. Because sufficient time was available for answer and the rules of procedure were not so rigid as in the case of the Starred Question. The number of admitted Unstarred Questions was more or less similar to that of the Starred Questions.

Apart from that, the Legislators were found to be constituency oriented in performing their legislative role in the Assembly.

The effectiveness of a legislature depends primarily on the extent to which its members conducted themselves in the Assembly. The legislators were expected to take active interest in the Assembly Proceedings. Besides that, they were expected to conform to the norms of decorum of the House. The Opposition members in particular were expected to adopt the Practices that were not merely obstructionist. Judging by these criteria the behaviour of the members of the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly could be judged as
satisfactory. Barring a few occasions, both the members of the Ruling Party and the Opposition had generally conducted themselves in conformity with the rules of the House. Occasions of disorderly conduct or pandemonium were rare. Only on a few occasions there were certain aberrations.

The Opposition is a necessary element for the successful functioning of parliamentary democracy. It helps to keep the Government on its alertness and if it could be strong, it could provide an alternative Government. The Opposition could, on an average secure 51 seats in the Eight Assam Legislative Assembly. However, the Opposition took keen interest in focusing attention on issues of public importance. The Opposition also deserved the credit for its vigilance in pointing out the areas of mal-administration and corruption by the Government. It had brought into focus several irregularities, inefficiencies, corruption in high places. The Opposition were found to be unitedly fight against such issues inside the Legislature.
In the Assam Legislative Assembly, the Opposition was by and large strong enough to challenge the Ruling Party on several occasions. There were as many as seven Opposition Parties in the Assembly, yet they were not so much ideologically opposed to one another.

Our findings revealed that very few legislators were the persistent questioners who participated in the Question Hour. The questions raised related to the numerous problems associated with various Departments of the Government. Most of the Questions were of local constituency oriented. It cannot be denied that most of the questions concerned the matter of considerable public importance. Participation in the proceedings of the House was a chance in which Legislative Elite built up their better political image and capitalized on it wherever the opportunity arose.

Legislators in the Opposition had much faith in the primacy of constitutional methods. On few occasions, they were found to adopt certain unparliamentary methods to criticize the Government to achieve their ends. Even
sometimes members of the Ruling Party were found to behave in particular ways. It appeared that the members had not yet adapted themselves fully with the methods of democratic Politics.

Another finding was that the members very often complain about non reply of a large number of important question of public importance. This was due to non coordination between the Minister and the civil servant which sometimes made the very purpose of the question infructuous.

Further our findings revealed the background of the Political Elites. It was found that majority of the Legislative Elites joined politics during the Post-independent period. Social movements appeared to be a strong platform behind the emergence of political leadership in Assam. Most of such members had no elitist background before their entry into party politics. They emerged as political value setters because of their leadership in the historic Assam movement. A large number of the legislators participated in the Assam
movement who subsequently emerged as the ruling class in Assam. We found differentiation of the socialization pattern of the Legislative Elites in the politics of Assam.

Although the questions asked in the 8th Assam Legislative Assembly served the purpose for the redressal of the grievances, the irony was that the questions had also been used as a weapon of political attack, basically an Opposition party activity, and manifestation of individual grievances, this tendency was high. It undermined the efficiency of the functioning of the parliamentary democracy besides leading to the decline of the Legislature.

The recurring phenomena of pandemonium, violence inside the Legislature, unruly behaviour by some Legislators, absence of members in observing the legislative proceedings were by and large noticed in the Eight Assam Legislative Assembly. These were all connected with the behaviour of the Legislators which had its own relevance to articulation. The Legislators are representative of the people. Increasing
trend of absentation in the business of the House is negation to the principle of parliamentary democracy.

Another interesting finding was that the members from the Treasury Bench seemed to criticize the Government policy sometimes very vehemently. On a number of occasions that had put the Government at the loggerheads by seriously criticizing the Government policies. It appeared that the members were influenced more by ideology, and not by party interest. The members in the Assembly tried to focus on the basic problems of the state as well as those of the constituencies irrespective of their ideological differences. Thus, some sort of Opposition had appeared inside the ruling party itself.

**Suggestions:-**

Basing on the findings of our study, few suggestion for the smooth functioning of the Assembly may be offered. First, since Question Hour is an indispensable part of the proceedings of the Assembly, under no circumstances the Question Hour should be sacrificed for the
sake of transaction of Government business.

Secondly, unnecessary supplementary should not be allowed to be put in the Assembly which sometimes adversely effects the working of the Legislatures. Supplementary should be brief and precise as far as possible.

Thirdly, the object of supplementary question is to elucidate ambiguity in the reply of a Minister or to seek for some other information. But it is not to cross examine the Minister concerned. It is in the use of supplementaries and their answers that presence of mind, ready wit and parliamentary acumen come into full play. However, in practice it was found that many supplementaries become a sort of speech and involve great waste of time of the House. This was also because many supplementaries are clumsily worded, irrelevant, very lengthy and merely time consuming in the Eight Assam Legislative Assembly. Therefore, the Speaker should admit the supplementaries with a complete exclusion of repetitive ones so that the purpose should be to obtain information and not to make accusation.
Fourthly, It was found during the survey that some members were indifferent and hardly took part in the Question Hour. In reality, barring a small group of members of the Treasury bench and the Opposition bench, some members do not participate in the Question Hour. The public will be more benefited if a greater numbers of members take active part in the Question Hour.

Fifthly, Unimportant question should be eliminated so that the members may devote more time to important questions. As questions and answers entail a huge expenditure by the Government measure to effect economy of the question time should be adopted.

Our brief survey of the literature on Legislative Elites in Assam lead us to conclude that the concept of Legislative Elites is nebulous. The legislators are the key decision makers in the society who largely shape the political values in the society. There is no single theory of Elite which could be applied or has been applied for the study of Assam Legislative Elites. What we had is a rich feast of concept
postulates, theorems and other prepositions drawn from incompatible theories on an eclectic basis. The empirical data even though sporadic and have many gaps, these had been pinned together to give a working profile of the Legislative Elites in Assam and their leadership.

There is a great need for theoretically oriented and more detailed sociological studies. They could call for a deeper empirical study delving into the socio-structural reality of the society and politics of Assam. We leave this for future researchers with greater resources of time, money and theoretical equipment.