CHAPTER - IV

POLITY

To maintain order, a society needs a political organization which frames rules and code of conduct for its members. These may be in the form of folkways, customs or tradition, or may be in the written form depending upon whether the society is primitive/simple or advanced/complex.

Every political system derives it structure from the society it governs. Immaterial of the fact whether the society is primitive or advanced, it always has some mechanism to control the activities of its inhabitants. Forms of political institutions vary from society to society depending upon its cultural background and immediate circumstances. Various thinkers have categorized societies on the basis of political set-up. Aristotle from his study of 158 states classified societies into monarchies, i.e., rule by one person; aristocracies, i.e. rule by a few; and finally, democracies, i.e. rule by many (New Encyclopaedia, Britanica). On the basis of headship/leadership Spenser (1874) has classified societies into (i) Simple - which is headless, (ii) Compound - which has occasional headship, (iii) Doubly compound - which has unstable headship and (iv) Trebly compound - which has stable headship. Similarly, Hobhouse has classified societies on the basis of social bond into-kinship, authority and citizenship. Thus, a political system in a given society develops in any form depending upon the needs of the society. (cited in Bottomore, 1975).
Power is fundamental to every political institution. It operates at all levels of social interaction. Every society works out certain arrangements for the distribution of power among a few. There are certain socially approved criteria for individuals to acquire power, which may be both ascriptive (like kinship, etc.) as well as achieved (like personal attributes). Those individuals who fulfill these criteria are given the privileged position of power. These privileged individuals have the right to issue orders which conform to socially approved norms/laws. To make the people adhere to these rules, the individual(s) in power have a right to use force. A general obedience and acceptance by the citizens in turn reinforces the rules more firmly. Power thus takes the form of authority. It is regarded as legitimate by citizens and it seems to promote the collective goals which are beneficial for all.

Basic functional necessity of political institutions for social order and social control makes political institutions a universal phenomenon. Various functions performed by political institutions can be classified under three heads. First, enactment of rules/laws, i.e., those in power have the responsibility of creating and approving the rules. Secondly, enforcement of rules/laws, i.e., putting into effect the rules that have been made. It is necessary that people should conform their behaviour according to a set pattern of rules and regulations. Thirdly, judicial, i.e., to resolve the conflicts arising among the citizens and punish those who try to violate the approved normative pattern of behaviour.
There are also a number of other functions like, the general well-being of its citizens, protecting its territorial area from outside attack, etc.

Every political institutions is characterized by given geographical area, hierarchy of different social positions occupied by various individuals like chief/leaders, and an administrative staff to assist them, and finally, it demands obedience from the citizens and punishes those who violate the rules and regulations.

A few scholars (Barkatki 1984, Bose 1985, Madan and Majumdar 1989) in their analyses have tried to highlight certain characteristic features of political set-up in a specific society. Most of the studies depict that political set-ups in tribal societies are characterized by the institution of headmanship/chief, who is usually assisted by elderly members of the community or leading men of different clans who assist and control the absolute authority of headmanship/chief. Tangkhul Nagas (Horam, M. 1977) are ruled by a headman/chief called 'awunga', who is prominent at all social and religious gathering. However, power of a headman is curbed and controlled by village council which consists of one representative from each clan. It handles the executive, administrative, and judicial functions. Similarly, as pointed out by Barkatki (1984), Khasi tribe is ruled over by Simen, i.e., a chief who belongs to a specific clan, and who is assisted by simen's myntries (ministers). "He can not take decision in important matters without the consent of
state darbar or executive council of which myntries are members and simen the presiding officer" (Barkatki 1984). Traditional policy of Santhals, as pointed out by Bose (1985) consisted of the Manjhi, Paramanick, Jog paramanick, Jog Manji, Naiki and Kundum Naiki. The social authority in the Santhal villages was exercised ordinarily by Manjhi, with a batch of village officials to assist him. The Manjhi performed his duties with the help of secondary officials like Jog Manjhi Paramanick, etc. Madan and Majumdar (1989) also point out similar pattern of headship/chief among 'Kamar tribe of the Madhya Pradesh, Khaira tribe, Rengma naga.

Political set up of a village community has an altogether different shape which is characterized by Panchayat System. Panchayat literally means the council of Elders constituted by five persons. Usually a number of villages come to constitute a panchayat. Representatives are elected (panches) from different village or from the different wards of the same village in addition to the president (Sarpanch) who is elected by entire population consisting panchayat. The Sarpanch along with the panches constitute the executive body of the panchayat, the local village government (Oomm 1984). Studies conducted on the political set-up of the village community focuses their attention on functions, segregation of power among the dominant group, exploitation etc (Imandar, 1970, Somjee 1971, Cairass, 1972 1972 etc.)

In the present chapter an attempt has been made to analyse Malana's political system in details, highlighting its structural and
Pujari (right side) and Karmishat
Platform where Jaisthang meets Sacred Stone of Devta Around Which All Administrative and Political Decisions are Taken
functional aspects. An attempt has also been made to understand how
Malana's political set up is strongly interwoven with other institutions
such as religion.

Malana's political system has three levels of authority. First
is the Jaisthang, second is the Chhaba, and third, the final and
ultimate authority lies with supreme devta or deity. In the following
pages we will discuss them in detail.

I. Jaisthang

In the hierarchical order of authority at Malana, the Jaisthang occupies
the bottom position. Jaisthang is a body consisting of eleven members.
Three of its members are permanent with life-long membership, while
eight members are temporary with a membership two years. The three
permanent members who hold the office for life time are karmishat
(Devta's manager), pujari (Priest), and gur (devta's interpreter). They
are collectively called Mudiea.

Procedure of recruitment of Jaisthang

Hereditary principle operates in the recruitment of both Karmishat and
pujari. Karmishat is recruited from Themaning clan while the pujari is
from Nagwaing clan. The eldest son after his father's death gets this
position. However, if the members of the clan feel that he is not
capable, or he himself refuses to take up the hereditary position
because of the various restrictions associated with the office, then
selection is made from the rest of the sons. In any case, a person for
this position has to be selected from that particular family, subject to
the condition that he is married and free from any physical deformity.
The procedure of selection of the third member, i.e., the *gur*, is very interesting. The *gur* can be from any of the clans, except Themning, Nogwaing and scheduled caste. It is believed that the *gur* is selected by the *devta* himself. At the time of *devta*’s ceremonies, suddenly one person starts shaking his head so violently that it becomes difficult to hold him. He dances in a very exhausting and abnormal way, shaking his head vigorously and beating himself brutally with iron chains so much so that he almost faints. To test his magical powers bestowed on him by Jamlu Devta, he is put in his house and outer door is closed and three locks are put. In case he performs the miracle of coming out by breaking off the roof with his head or unlocking door by his spiritual power, he is declared as the *gur*. The condition of being married and being free from physical deformity is not applicable in his case. The local inhabitants could recall the names of only two *gurs* who acted as spokesmen of the *devta* and had all magical powers. The last *gur* died about 3 years ago and since then no one has exhibited the magical power and hence, this position was lying vacant.

The rest of the eight members who are collectively called *jaistha* are recruited by nomination by their respective clans. At the time of selection, members of every clan gather on their own specific platform. Usually the male head from each family has to be present over there. The members of a clan nominate one individual called as *Phogaldar*. This nomination is by consensus and is usually unanimous. *Phogaldar*, who is generally an aged person is given the right to nominate any one male member of his clan, who he feels can carry on the
responsibility of the office as a member of the Jaisthang. The only other provisions are that he be married and free from any physical defects. Thus in a similar way, every clan nominates its Phogaldars, who in turn nominate the representatives of their clans and thus, eight members of the Jaisthang are chosen. They are taken by the members of their clan near a specific platform called chontra where the Jaisthang meets. On reaching the platform, Jaistha bows thrice before the mudiea and takes his seat with them. A special prayer is performed and a ram is sacrificed, which is symbolic of their being accepted as members of the Jaisthang. In this procedure of nomination by each clan the two clans Nagwaing' and Themanning are in a privileged position having four members from their clans out of a total eleven members forming the body of the Jaisthang.

The members of Jaisthang are required to observe a number of restrictions so that they can exhibit a life style which is different from the commoners. They are also granted certain privileges for holding office in the Jaisthang.

Restrictions

The three permanent members are required to observe certain restrictions in their day to day life. First they are not allowed to sit near any dead body. If there is a death in any family or in their own family, they are not supposed to touch or go near the corpse. Secondly, they are not permitted to hunt the animals. Thirdly, they are not supposed to plough the fields. Fourthly they
cannot weave and fifthly, they are not supposed to drink or gamble.

In addition to these restriction, they are also required to keep a physical distance from the members of the scheduled caste. The members of the scheduled caste are not allowed even to sit at the same level as the members of the mudiea.

The members of mudiea are given due respect by the people of Malana. For all practical purposes they are treated as spokesmen of Malana. They are shown great reverence whenever people of Malana meet them. The pujari and the karmishat get some land of devta for their maintenance. There is an official residence for pujari which is earmarked for the person who holds the office. He is distinguished from other persons by his special turban, which he always wears. During community feasts or any such gathering, the members of mudiea are always served first and only when they start eating, are the others allowed to eat. Even in their own families, no family member can take food unless they are first served.

In comparison to these three permanent members, the other eight members have relatively less restriction and privileges. There are no restrictions in their daily life except on gambling and drinking. They are not entitled for the same type of rights as the members of mudiea. Nevertheless, being the spokesmen of their respective clans, they enjoy a place of respect in their own clans.
Role responsibility

After discussing the responsibilities and rights of these officials, it is desirable to discuss the role-responsibility associated with their office. Though they have numerous responsibilities, their main responsibility pertains to the polity of Malana which can be discussed under two heads (i) Judicial and (ii) Administrative.

Judicial

As already stated, the Jaisthang acts as the lowest court of appeal, and imparting justice is its foremost responsibility.

a) Procedure of imparting Justice

The procedure of filing the case is quite simple. When a person with a grievance wants to seek justice, he lights a fire in a fixed place near Harcha (common place). Members of Jaisthang are thus informed and they reach the spot immediately. They listen to the grievances. Depending upon the severity of the problem, they decide upon when to call a meeting. The meeting is called either immediately, or after one or two days.

(b) Compulsory attendance

When the members of the Jaisthang meet it is compulsory for every person, i.e. the male head of every family to attend. One person
shouts thrice at an interval of twenty minutes. All the while he holds a stick in his hand and after the third shout, he puts down the stick on the ground which symbolizes that the attendance is over. He then identifies those who are absent. If someone is absent due to some unavoidable circumstance, like illness, or some other important work which the Jaisthang feels is a genuine excuse, he is exempted from the fine. However, wilful absentees are fined Rs.2/- each. The people who assemble on such occasions are referred to as kanisthang.

(c) Collective Decision

At the meeting of the Jaisthang aggrieved party is asked to present its case. Then an opportunity is provided to the accused party to present its version, i.e., first the deponent makes the allegations, and then the accused or defendant is required to defend his case before the Jaisthang. After listening to both the parties, the members of the Jaisthang (like the jury) discuss the case among themselves to arrive at a certain decision which is based on consensus. After having arrived at the decision one member out of mudiea and one member out of the rest of the eight members of Jaisthang, announce the decision to the Kanisthang for approval. Members of the Kanisthang are free to raise their voice either 'for' or 'against' the decision. If the Kanisthang approves the decision, it is implemented immediately. In case the Kanisthang disapproves the decision given by the Jaisthang, then the verdict cannot be
implemented, and the case has to be passed to the second court of appeal. Similarly, if the deponent or the defendant, feels that justice has not been granted to him, he is also free to move his case to the second court of appeal, i.e., Chhaba.

(d) Fines/Punishment

Most of the ordinary disputes are settled by the jaisthang by imposing a fine on the convict. The amount of fine varies from Rs.2/- to Rs.2000/- depending upon the nature of crime. For example, if any one files the case in formal judicial courts outside Malana, he is fined Rs.2000/-. If someone intentionally allows his cattle to graze in other's fields, he is fined Rs.25/- per day. However, if it is done unintentionally, then he is fined Rs.2.50 per day. In addition to the fine, violating party has to compensate the aggrieved party of its loss. The extent of the damage is evaluated by persons of four chugs (teams). All the inhabitants are groups into 4 chugs. Theft of any sort is considered to be a serious offence for which a fine of Rs.10/- is imposed. In addition to the fine, the thief is required to return double the amount of stolen goods to the owner of the party. The most heinous offence is considered as the 'theft in the devta's treasury'. It is very vital issue for the jaisthang for which an immediate meeting is called. Most severe punishment, i.e., total social boycott by the community is imposed on him. In all the cases where the fine is
more than Rs. 2.50, it goes to the devta's treasury. Otherwise it is kept with the jaisthang members.

2) Administrative

For the management of public affairs, the Malana community is divided into four chugs (i.e., team or a group). Every male head of the household, or eldest male member of a household has to be a member of one chug or the other. The choice is given to the individual and membership of a chug has nothing to do with clan membership. Members of one clan can opt for different chugs.

Every member is free to change his membership from one chug to another. In other words, it is a sort of grouping of individuals into four teams for performing the work allocated to the team.

At the time of the present study, following was the clan-wise distribution of different families in four chugs. (Table No. 4.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of the Chug</th>
<th>Clanwise Distribution of Families</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Saura Behr</td>
<td>Dhara Behr</td>
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<td>NG  TH  YH</td>
<td>TI  DH  PH  BH  SH</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dharaning</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Puchaning</td>
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<td>Themaning</td>
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<td>Sarwal</td>
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<td>24</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Though as per version of the inhabitants, membership of a chug is independent of one's clan association, we found that members of five clans Yeoachbehru, Themaning, Puchaning Dharaning and Bairigaez, had collectively associated themselves to form a single chug.

These chugs work under the overall supervision of the Jaisthang. It is the responsibility of the Jaisthang to see to it that the work pertaining to the welfare of Malana is done properly and in time. Whenever there is any work of common interest, like clearing off the paths during snow, or organising any festival or ceremonial feast, or construction of path, then the Jaisthang allocates the work between different chugs. The members of a chug develop a team spirit among themselves and there is always a constructive competition between all the four chugs. Each chug would work in such a manner so that it supercedes the others. The Jaisthang not only allocates and supervises the work to be done by different chugs, but it also has the right to impose a fine on the defaulters, which is Re. one per day.

The Jaisthang also has the right to appoint four watchmen who are normally young and healthy persons and belonging to any clan. Their appointment is for a period of 3 years. The Jaisthang authorises these persons to investigate certain cases and report back. These persons act as policemen and they are
responsible for catching the culprit or tracing someone's missing property. In case there is a non-realisation of fine imposed by the Jaisthang, then they are asked to seize the utensils of that persons worth the amount fined which are deposited in the devta's treasury.

In addition to the appointment of four watchmen, the Jaisthang also appoints a team of four members for a period of one year to look after the guests. Every visitor coming to Malana is regarded as a guest of Jamlu devta. It is the responsibility of these four persons to look after the comforts of the guests by making arrangements for their stay, food etc. Any visitor is given free food from Devta's store for three days.

Dissolution of Jaisthang

As the three members of the Jaisthang have a permanent membership, they cannot resign. It is only the members of the Jaistha who can resign. However, if one member of Jaistha resigns, the entire Jaistha is dissolved and a fresh selection of members of Jaistha take place. There are another bases on which Jaistha can be dissolved. If one member dies, or due to some accident loses his sight or limb indicating a physical defect, the Jaistha is dissolved.

2. Chhaba

Chhaba is the second level of authority at Malana which acts as a
higher court. There are two chhabas: one is Bada chhaba (Big Chhaba) and the second is chhota chhaba (small chhaba). Membership of these chhabas is based on the clan principle. Families of three clans of Dhara Behr, namely Bairigaez and 'Shillu', have a hereditary right for the membership of Bada Chhaba, while the families of Theoachbehru clan have a hereditary right to be the members of chhota chhaba. Only the male heads of each family of these clans are considered to be the members of their respective chhabas. Members of the bada chhaba meet at Dhara Behr, while chhota chhaba meets at Saura Behr. Platform where the members of the chhaba meet is known as Khrongadi in local dialect. Chhota chhaba, is responsible for framing rules and taking decision for the community. Members of the chhota chhaba are considered wisemen of the community and hence are given high regard. Members of the bada chhaba are expected to get the decisions implemented. In individual cases if a party is not satisfied with the decision of the Jaisthang, one can appeal before either the chhota chhaba, or the bada chhaba. However, the members of Theoachbehru who belong to the chhota chhaba can not appeal before their own chhaba, and they have to appeal to Bada-chhaba, and vice-versa. The remaining four clans are free to appeal before either the chhota chhaba or the bada chhaba.

Members of either chhaba don't have to observe any restrictions, neither do they enjoy any special privileges. However, they have an important role to play in the political set-up of Malana. In the following pages, we will discuss their
role also under two sub heads (a) Judicial and (b) administrative.

(a) Judicial

The Chhaba is the higher court of appeal. When a person is not satisfied with judgment of the Jaisthang or if the Kanisthang is not ready to approve the decision given by the Jaisthang, then the case is passed on to the Chhaba. Thus a person has a right to entertain an appeal against the decision of the Jaisthang. In other words, the chhaba acts as a higher court and has right to rule out the decision of the Jaisthang, which is treated as a lower court.

Procedure of filing the case

One can appeal for justice in any of the chhabas, either the bada chhaba or the chhota chhaba. Here, again, a well defined procedure of filing the case is followed. As in the case of Jaisthang, a person with grievance goes and lights a fire at a specific place near karongadi. In addition he also places Rs.6/- besides it as a sort of court fee. Members of the chhaba on getting the information gather there and listen to his case. If they feel that the case is worth discussing, they pick up the money. Picking up of the money is of a great significance, because the acceptance of court fee means that it is willing to listen to the case afresh and give its own decision. It does not, however, mean
that by accepting the fee, the chhaba has to reverse the decision of the jaisthang.

It is not compulsory for the masses to attend the meeting of the chhaba. However, people (male) out of curiosity are present in large numbers. Decision is taken unanimously by the chhaba members, which is announced by any elder member of the chhaba.

It is important to point out that if the members of the jaisthang are of the opinion that the decision given by them is correct, and the justice imparted by the chhaba is not up to the mark they can also raise their voice against the chhaba's decision. If the person whose case is being heard is not satisfied with the justice given by the chhaba, then the case is passed to the third court of appeal which is ultimate and final authority. It should be noted that a person is not allowed to take his case to the other chhabas. He can only file the case once, either before the bada chhaba or the chhota chhaba.

If a person is not satisfied with the decision of the jaisthang and the Chhaba(s), and he/she does not even want to appeal before the final court of justice, i.e., Jamlu devta, one can go to the judicial court. However, for that purpose, one has to get the consent of the Puchaning clan, because it is considered as the supreme sanctioning authority for allowing intra-community disputes.
to be decided by outside courts.

During the last three years there had been only one case, which had been decided outside Malana by the judicial court of Kulu. In that case there was a dispute between a husband and wife. The husband had deserted his wife and she had brought an appeal before the jaisthang. When the decision was announced, she was not satisfied with the decision of the jaisthang, because she felt that the maintenance allowance granted by the jaisthang was very low. She made an appeal before chhota chhaba and again was not satisfied with the decision of the chhaba. She subsequently approached Puchaning clan for getting permission to move the judicial court. The request was granted by Puchaning clan and the case was decided by the judicial court of Kulu. The inhabitants of Malana did not remember any other case where a person had gone to appeal before the judicial court, without going through the channels of the community. As per their version, if a person approaches the court directly, one is bound to get punishment from the community in the shape of fine and social boycott. Keeping in view the severity of the punishment for such violation, no one dares to violate the channels of justice available in the community.

Administrative

As pointed out earlier, members of the chhota chhaba are responsible for farming the rules, and can amend the previous rules
for administrative purposes. However, it is essential that the chhaba should not interfere with any law concerned or linked with religion, whereas, members of the bada chhaba are expected to get the decision of the chhota chhaba implemented. It is authorised to give orders to the Phogaldars to make use of force to see to it that the rules are implemented.

From the foregoing analysis of allocation of judicial and administrative powers, we notice that except Yeoachbehru clan, every clan has some role of importance to play in the judicial machinery. Themaning clan gets its representation in Karmishat, Nagwaing clan has its pujari, the families of the three clans, Bairigaez, Dharaning and Shillu have representation in Bada Chhaba while Threachbehru clan is represented in chhota chhaba. Puchaning clan occupies a position as the supreme sanctioning authority. There is, however, no representation of Yeoachbehru clan in the whole judicial set-up. After a great probing, it was found that the members of Yeoachbehru clan immigrated to Malana after the distribution of administrative, judicial and religious duties had already been decided. Hence, they were regarded as a later addition and could not be allocated such responsibilities.

Jamlu Devta

Jamlu devta is regarded as a supreme deity. He is the third and final authority in the judiciary system of Malana. Decisions given
by Him cannot be challenged by any inhabitant. He is believed to be omnipresent and knows everything about every one. Fear is imbibed among the masses that He automatically punishes those who tell lies, steal and violate His rules. It is believed that Jamlu devta punishes those who give false witness, take false oaths and try to bribe the members of the first court of appeal. Members of the first court of appeal are believed to be more exposed to the danger of punishment by the devta, if they are unfair in giving justice, or take bribes, or give special favours to their relatives. Devta expresses his wrath by illness, blindness, making them crippled, madness, or even death.

Judicial

When an individual is not satisfied by the decision imparted to him by the Jaisthang or the chhaba, he can appeal to this final court of justice.

Procedure of imparting justice

Procedure of imparting justice by the devta is such that the person concerned informs the members of Mudiea that he wants his case to be decided by Jamlu devta. Mudiea fixes a date which they feel is proper and arranges for two goats. The goats must be of equal age, weight, etc. On the fixed day, both the opposing parties choose one goat each. These goats are then taken to a particular place, which is known as the 'Land of devta' and are tied to
specific trees which are regarded as very sacred. No one can enter the land of devta except the members of Mudiea who are supposed to be present over there. The pujari cuts open the thighs of both of the goats and inserts poison in it. The person whose goat dies first loses the case, and the person whose goat dies later wins the case. Mudiea arranges goats from the person who has the largest number of goats. In lieu of the goats, the mudiea grants grazing rights to the family from the near by forest. The party in dispute has to pay a nominal fee of Re.1/- only. After the decision of the devta, meat of the goats is cooked and is distributed among the community members.

The decision of the devta is regarded as the final decision, which cannot be challenged. If some one refuses to obey the devta's order he is boycotted by the masses. This is known as desh nikala. Even his blood relations are not supposed to have any relation with him. This is regarded as the most serious punishment inflicted on the offenders.

Administrative

Jamlu devta does not have much role to play in the administration. If there is any confusing situation, where it becomes difficult for the inhabitants to take a decision, then the problem is put forward to the Jamlu devta for solution.
Devtā speaks out from the mouth of the gur, who is regarded as the mouthpiece of devta. Gur takes his seat on the specific platform situated on the land of devta, after taking a ceremonial bath. No body can touch gur at such time. After taking his seat, he starts reciting certain prayers and after few minutes he starts shaking violently, produces strange voices, swings his head with his long hair open in all directions. When this stage reaches its peak, he starts speaking in a different voice, which is regarded as the devta’s voice. It is believed by the Malanese that at such a stage, the spirit of the devta enters the body of the gur, to answer the questions put forward, and solve the various problems, and make the people aware of the coming crisis.

Most of the studies conducted on Malana, while focussing on political set-up have claimed it as the 'oldest democracy in the world' (G.S.Chambial 1974 , Times of India, 1981, Panjab Kesari (in Hindi) 1981), the parliamentary form of govt (Avinash Mookhey, 1983), without citing any evidence either with regard to its time span or its actual functioning. The people of Malana have been participating in the election process for state assembly and Parliament by casting their votes. Since independence they en bloc had favoured Congress party. It was only in the last election in 1989 that they favoured Bhartiya Janta Party in place of Congress. The Malanese were of the opinion due to the grace of their devta to whomsoever they had voted had won the election.
The Malanese instead of casting their votes based on individual volition decide for the whole community and all the eligible voters caste their votes accordingly. They are afraid of *devta* if they lose their unity.

Foregoing analysis highlights three principal factors which operate in the recruitment of various persons to offices of authority. First, the principle of inheritance, as is clear from the recruitment of *Karmishat* and *pujari*. Second is the random selection as in the case of *gur* and thirdly, mutual consensus, as is evident in the selection of eight *jaistha* members.

As in all folk societies, so at Malana, the aged are given a great importance and respect. This is due to the fact that age means experience. Further, in the absence of any written guidelines, whatever the elders learn through the trial and error method is passed on to the younger generation. Other significant feature that has come to light is that women are completely ignored in the political process. They absolutely don't have any role to play in the polity of Malana.

Fundamental political unit of Malana is the 'clan' around which the whole political set-up revolves while the basic functional unit is *chug*, which is based on personal liking. Hence, kinship as well as personal relations play a significant role in the polity of Malana.
Except Jamlu devta, who speaks out through the mouth of gur, no body is given absolute power. Public opinion is given vital importance. Main force operating to maintain social order and social control is the fear of punishment from Jamlu devta. It is the fear of wrath from the supreme deity which makes people abide by the rules and regulations, as such to retain the political set-up of Malana. However, taking into account the representation given to different families in the administration of justice, and participation of people (except women) of different clans for arriving at a consensus, Malana's political system approximates to a commune.