Each society possesses an inbuilt mechanism to regulate the behaviour and activities of its members. In Indian rural society, this function was delegated to the village councils and its leaders. The major functions of these leaders in the past were the defence of the village, settlement of disputes, celebration of community level rites and rituals and collection of revenue, etc. There was no possibility of outside support either to maintain law and order or for welfare activities here. For lack of good transportation and communication facilities, combined with illiteracy and ignorance which prevailed among the villagers, the role played by these leaders was of much significance. Their role was also quite appreciable in maintaining the society as a cohesive unit in the face of higher political instability and rivalry and the fast and ever changing rulers. This type of political system was omnifunctional in nature with respect to its social and ritual responsibility. And this mechanism was successful in keeping the village and the society nearer to the level of self-sufficiency. This type of leaders had one
objective - to maintain the status quo in societal life. So, they became the advocates and promoters of customs and traditions of the society. They themselves became staunch followers and even served as models for others. This implies that their source of power and authority were tradition. Traits and factors such as age, good behaviour, good family background became the leadership factors.

In due course of time and with the change in state administration, the village level leaders were recognised and given the posts of Grāmini or Goundā (gouda) and Pattalike (Patil). Their power and source of authority though traditional, were now given official powers to maintain law and order and to collect revenue for the rulers of the land. The rulers who were constantly at war with each other, were found to be interested only in the revenues and loyalty of their subjects. With this type of minimum state interference in the village administration, the village leaders continued to exercise their power and authority in the traditional way. This type of leadership situation continued as the rulers were also Hindus. With the coming of outside and non-Hindu rulers the situation
began to change in village administration and leadership. The rulers became mere political leaders and not socio-ritual leaders.

The advent of the British-Raj systematized the revenue collection of the state through the introduction of ryotwari system of land-tenure, landlordism and village officials such as Patil, Accountant and so on. While doing so they also used the existing leadership in the village. This brought further favourable situation to traditional leaders in the village to consolidate their position in the society. They being traditional leaders, always used their position and power to strengthen their source of authority and power-tradition. With the incoming of such vested interests among the leaders, their enthusiasm and care for the community acquired secondary importance. With the coming of the British rule in India many new things came up and among them are modern education, improved means of transport and communication, employment outside the caste system and mobility. There also came awareness about social positions and so also the social legislations to solve some of the problems such as rural poverty, social injustice and so on.

Along with the above things a number of administrative and social reforms also came to India.
Even though they were introduced keeping an eye on the effective administration of the state to maintain uninterrupted collection of revenue to the state and to maintain law and order they had their indirect effect on the Indian society as a whole. Among the benefits, the notion of democracy and equalism, rule of law, social justice, etc. are important.

This type of seeds of social welfare sown during the British rule and the struggle which led to independence, forced the country to commit itself to a policy of welfare state. This is construed as the strategy of achieving a coherent development of the society, especially the rural one. Many developmental programmes and schemes such as National Extension Service, Community Development, etc., were introduced. However, later it was found that these programmes showed a built in bias against the rural poor, influenced largely by considerations of economic growth and re-organization of economic system in support of such growth against the concept of social justice through equity in income and asset distribution (guidelines on IRD:CIRDAP:1983:1). One of the major drawbacks identified in these programmes was the emphasis laid on the self rule. Accordingly the rural administrative institutions such as Village
Panchayats, were changed under the rule of democratic decentralization policy and process. But this also brought in many problems in rural leadership since the new official positions were monopolized by the traditional leaders or their puppets.

One cannot, however, deny the positive factors invested by the new programmes of the Government. As an impact, the Indian rural societies have gained a lot of acceleration towards modernity. Introduction of modern transportation and communication system, liberal and modern education, market and money economy have brought scope for change in their outlook and life. Modern education has also helped in minimizing the old beliefs and customs among the people. New and paying employment opportunities in and outside the village, introduction of market economy, have affected the traditional ties among different caste and community members. Introduction of democratic institutions has aimed at lessening the cohesive factors, such as caste and kin, which were detrimental in the developmental process. In place of these non-corporate groups, grouping in the form of factions and political parties have started appearing on the scene.
The Green revolution followed by Intensive Agricultural Development Programme (I.A.D.P.) and Small Farmers Development Agency (S.F.D.A.), etc. have tilted the rural economy from agricultural predominance to market oriented economy. As a net result, the rural societies are moving towards an egalitarian one.

The rural society of Shamalapura, which is the focus of this study is not an exception to such an influence. It too has its own share of successes and failures. The traditional inter-caste dependence through \textit{Jajmani} ties are changing. Owing to new vistas, people are aspiring to alienate from such relationship for better prospects. The caste and religious norms, the rules of commensality which were once observed strictly, are seen losing their legitimacy.

The belief in supernatural beings and magic is another aspect to lose the credibility. The younger generation with faith in science and technology hardly believes in them. With this the religious rituals have lost their colour and importance and have become occasions for socio-political interaction. The fertility festivals and rites performed to evade evil spirits have been minimized to the level of formality, and in their
place modern methods of cultivation, improved tools and techniques have come. It is also seen that the participation of the entire village population in these rites and rituals is absent. The traditional leaders of the village though influential, cannot do anything with this since they have lost their traditional authority to punish the offender or reward the honest persons.

The rites of passage rituals which served as occasions to perform one's obligation towards individuals, community and society have now become occasions to extend and express one's goodwill towards fellow residents. Now their ritual importance is in vain and has become more a socio-cultural activity and provides occasions to display one's wealth, power and popularity. In the same manner the elaborate and ritual oriented community, caste and family festivals, which served as cohesive factors, have been changed and celebrated in a more symbolic and secular manner. Here again the force behind celebrating them is political and not ritual or moral as it used to be in the past.

With this trend, a similar situation is assumed in the political structure of Shāmālapura. But it is
still observed that the village is under the grip of traditional leaders. Compared to the modern leaders, the traditional leaders hold much more power and authority. Today most of the traditional leaders in Shāmālapura belong to the two ritually upper castes which are also well off economically - the Reddies and Lingayats. Our findings show that these two castes control not only political power, but also power in all other walks of village life. They own most of the residential and cultivable land in the village and so financially well off. They are ahead in education and all the village offices are also monopolised by them.

Ownership of most of the agricultural land not only helps these castes to control the principal means of production but also indirectly, as Mandelbaum (1970: 359) says, the people who depend on them such as labourers, tenants and debtors. This factor works to provide the required "adult population strength" to them, which again is a determinant factor in political structure.

These analytical findings lead to the conclusion that the community under study is in "transition" or passing through a "formative period". Generally the
democratic polity envisaged by our planners, with its participatory structures necessitates a consistent political culture. This culture is imbied with infra-structure of cultural components as socio-psychological pre-conditions for successful results. The absence of such pre-requisites leads to a formative state where "tradition" will be dominating the "modern", which is nearer to the concept of "closed way of life".

This is the stage, where traditional parameters are still employed to measure the activities. The value system is under stress and getting modified according to the changed situation but not to the extent of disturbing the total structure. The old values are still respected and change is superficial and probably needs more time to reach the depth. The political groupings, inter and intra-caste factions observed during the situations like elections are short-lived and once the situation gets diluted, the tension disappears and normalcy is regained due to redressive mechanism of the system.

It is observed that the community development and subsequent programmes failed in societies which are in transition. One of the reasons for this, as already
identified, is the active role played by the traditional leaders and their influence over the societies. The programmes failed to provide a representative body which fulfils the local interest and ensures the proper utilization and supervision of funds in conformity with needs and requirements of the locality. They were never enabled to invoke the people's participation nor its leader's interest in the field of development. And hence all the efforts put forth by the Government never percolated to the desired depth.

The Panchayati-raj system which was introduced in 1957 to break the dominance of traditional leadership, also failed to yield its benefits. It stressed the importance of decentralized democracy at the grass roots level by providing an opportunity to involve people in planning and implementing the developmental schemes. In line with the concept of people's participation, all the members including the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Village Panchayats were elected by secret ballot. Representation was also given to suppressed and weaker sections of the society. But here again the factional and political party feelings have defeated the very purpose of the new act. This can be attributed to the
selfish role played by the traditional leaders, who have a tendency to make use of any new thing for their benefit, more so the socio-economic factors, to retain the political power of the village with them.

With the introduction of Community Development and other programmes supposed to bring in the desired change in rural communities, altogether a different type of leadership was expected to take on the responsibility. So, when Government introduced new Acts to bring in democratic and modern type of leaders, initially the traditional leaders could manage to play the new roles. But when elections were introduced to select village leaders, the traditional leaders who got conscious of their status, did not contest the elections. Some of them did not have the necessary qualifications to become a candidate and others got worried that they may be defeated by some one insignificant in the village. So they projected their own men to contest these elections and also got them won, wherever possible. Now the elected leaders who are modern in terms of their leadership traits such as education, young age, democratic ideals and also elections, became tools in the hands of the traditional leaders. This could happen because when the elections were conducted the traditional
leaders, who still wield status and authority in rural society which is caste, poverty, factional rivalry ridden, could make use of their influence and authority to get elected a candidate of their choice. These young leaders, who though formal, do not draw their strength from the society and depend on the traditional leaders. In return they have to oblige the traditional leaders whenever an occasion arrives. In Shāmalāpura we have seen how the village panchayat Chairman, Chairman of the Weavers' Co-operative Society and leaders of the youth club, etc., function when it comes to the interests of traditional leaders.

A majority of the traditional leaders of Shāmalāpura are Lingayats and Reddies, and a few from other castes. The traditional leaders who belong to lower and poorer castes do not possess any authority beyond their sub-caste and at the most to their caste level. This is because of the changed socio-economic factors supported by factional politics.

The Village Panchayat of Shāmalāpura represents a mixture of both traditional and modern leaders. Almost half of the panchayat members, including the Chairman and
Vice-Chairman are controlled by the traditional leaders. They are projected and pushed to this status by their own kith and kin who are traditional leaders. These people act as tools of their seniors and influence the proceedings of the Panchayat. The situation clearly indicates the extent of domination by the traditional leaders.

Regarding the developmental programmes, these projected leaders holding the formal authority, give support to such programmes which are asked for by the traditional leaders and they bring benefits to them and their caste. Wherever it is possible they have rejected or blocked other programmes which affect the power, authority, status and position of traditional leaders.

In Chapter IV (Case No. 5, page 244) we have seen the type of activities undertaken by the village panchayat of Shāmalāpura and how they benefited a section of the society. This situation clarifies that, though the statutory panchayat is existing in the village since 1922, the people have not benefited much. The Community Developmental programmes and Panchayati-Raj systems have also failed to create a dent on the traditional power structure of the society. This proves our first
hypothesis - the desired changes introduced by the Government have not reached the villages.

One of the reasons for such an undesirable situation may be the attribute of the transitional nature, which the society is passing through. The intermittent phase is a crucial one where more than the social and economical, psychological adjustment of the people is essential. This psychological adjustment is a mental process which can be achieved only after attaining the social and economic comforts.

In a society like Shamalapura, where most of the cultivable land - the means of production - is controlled by one caste, the rest of the villagers have been reduced to a state of complete dependence on them. This has its own repercussions on the community life and living in the form of socio-economic and psychological suppression. Knowing that their caste has a dominant status in the village, the traditional leaders belonging to Reddy caste have used it for their selfish motives. As a result, even today the developmental, secular, popular programmes and ideas suffer a great setback in the village.
This type of situation created by traditional leaders in the community has deprived other castes, especially the weaker groups of the benefits of community life. This proves our second hypothesis - dominant castes with their socio-economic and political privileges play an important role in retaining the customary type of hold on the community.

The above factors like social and economic suppression, as a cause and effect of ignorance and illiteracy are the result of psychological backwardness. All the developmental programmes towards attainment of high economic standard and realization of democratic ideology have not left any impact on the society. As a result many of its institutions are still traditional based and this situation proves our third hypothesis.

In the present circumstances, the traditional leaders are reluctant to transfer the power and authority to the young and educated group or in other words, the so-called formal leaders are not in a position to stand independently apart from the traditional leaders. The traditional leaders are worried that the change may affect them in two ways - their control on the community
will be overlooked and the new leaders may come in their way of realizing the vested interests. In spite of their domination what they could not stop was the introduction of Government's policies of bringing new set of leaders through statutory panchayats.

Traditional leaders were by now, well versed with the Government's policies and programmes, through their experience in Community Development programmes. So, when the legislation of statutory panchayat and policy of democratic decentralization were introduced, they found out two ways to safeguard their interests. One was to accommodate themselves as the formal leaders or the other way was to bring such persons to the formal leadership, who can be under their control. Such type of leaders are identified and defined as neo-traditional leaders in Chapter III. But, while functioning they did not take any chance and have employed both the strategies. As a result, in the Village Panchayat, there are six (out of fifteen) members who are neo-traditional leaders. Both Chairman and Vice-Chairman belong to this category.

Further, a majority of the members of the executive committees of the two societies in the village
are traditional and neo-traditional type of leaders. These leaders with their vested interests, conservatism and mean-mindedness have become obstacles rather than promoters of the developmental programmes which are undertaken by the Government. This leadership structure of the village partially proves our fourth hypothesis - the traditional leaders control the statutory panchayat and other democratic institutions but from outside.

It was assumed that with their inability to hold formal leadership positions in the face of democratic legislation, the traditional leaders stay away from formal bodies but control the formal leaders from outside. But whenever opportunities came the traditional leaders themselves assumed the positions of formal leaders. This type of development is more dangerous to democratic type of rule, since the traditional leaders are now in the garb of modern democratic leaders. They can now influence and control the very functioning of the formal institutions such as village panchayat.

There is no doubt that the Indian rural society is changing. This is bound to occur due to natural processes or to the external pressures. This is the
stage of process where inputs are converted into outputs as desired results. If the outputs are not up to the mark, then there must be something wrong at the processing mechanism. Similar situation is seen in the case of Shamalapura. All the efforts of the Government by way of new legislation, Acts, etc., have not yielded the desired results. The only consolation for the above situation is its formative nature. This is a crucial period of processing which can be set right. The situation calls for an innovative approach, which could synthesise tradition and modernity for the harmonious development of the two. More functional education, transformation of attitudes, information dissemination and programmes for creating awareness are needed, so that more and more people should be taken into confidence of development. Unless a desire for economic and social equality is inculcated among the people, development schemes will be of less relevance.

Regarding functioning of the panchayat and their developmental activities, some corrective measures are quite essential. These are to ensure the performance of panchayat and its leaders in conformity with broader goals and objectives of the state and nation at large.
Indian rural society is still tradition based and the traditional leaders continue to be part of our system. Society also owes them much for their leadership and guidance provided during the critical periods. The only problem is they are obstacles to total development and they do so because of their vested interests. Under the given circumstances what best can be done is to make use of them whenever and wherever they are useful. When they are found to be a hindrance, one may be a bit careful to have control over them and see that the progress is not hampered.