Chapter VII: Summary and Conclusions

Soon after Independence, villages in India have acquired a new significance. The government of India has initiated a vigorous effort to transform the Indian villages into the vehicle of India’s rapid progress. Moreover, the adoption of Republican Constitution necessitated a thorough change in socio-political outlook of the rural masses. The Government has started giving thrust in the development of villages in order to strengthen the economy and the democracy in the country. It has rightly been argued that the notion of ‘rural development’ has far more egalitarian value than just the economic well-being of the villagers. It has been believed that India can emerge stronger by modernising and strengthening her villages. Thus, the government interventions in the rural sectors are viewed not merely as development measures but very importantly as initiatives of change and transformation.

From the inception of the First Five year plan, a huge endeavour is being made to overhaul the very productive base of the rural society as also its institutional and ideological superstructure. Serious efforts have been initiated to transform its ecological frame work, the mode and motif of its economic production, the pattern of class relationship in it, the type of social institutions and associations composing it, the configurations of political power, and the very value systems underlying the cultural life (Desai A.R. 1978).

The mammoth task of transforming Indian villages started with the launch of Five year plans in the country. The First five year plan visualized local self-government as
part of the organic constitutional and administrative framework linked with state and central levels in the process of developing the villages in India. It was, however, introduced seven years after the launching of the community development programme. The community development programme which was launched in 1952 sought to quicken the pace of socio-economic development in rural areas through the involvement and participation of the people, with the apparatus of development administration providing active guidance and support. The concept, methods and techniques of the programme had a wider democratic content. Exponents of community development frequently spoke of ‘community initiative’, ‘community action’, and ‘community organisation’. All this implied a stronger stress on local leadership and eventually, local self-government. However, the community development programme failed to evoke the local initiative and participation as its organization set up lacked space to the rural leadership.

The Balvantray Mehta Committee which undertook the evaluation of community development programme made observation that the lack of people’s participation has resulted into the failure of the programme. The committee in its report, in 1957 advocated the introduction of local self-government to tap the local initiative and participation. This recommendation was incorporated in the panchayat legislation of various states. From then onwards democratic decentralization has gained momentum and has reached the peak in the year 1993 when the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992 came into force. The introduction of panchayati raj institutions has widened the base of Indian democracy and has resulted into massive political socialization in the rural India. A new generation of leadership has started emerging with new outlook and ideas in the Indian villages.
The concept of democratic decentralization along with universal adult suffrage and land reforms and the spread of education have engineered tremendous social transformation in the Indian villages. The most visible of these changes is the change in the political outlook and politics in the rural India. It is argued that a more democratic, secular leadership has emerged in the villages replacing the traditional leadership. This study is an attempt to understand the emerging rural leadership in the backdrop of drastic social change taking place in our rural society.

The study of changes in the rural leadership can be focused broadly on three important aspects of leadership; the formation, values/attitudes or outlook and functioning/style. Since these three aspects are interrelated, the understanding of all these will help to get a comprehensive picture of the changing dimensions of rural leadership. At the outset, it is necessary to bear in mind the distinction between emerging leaders and emerging leadership. While there is no doubt that individual leaders and their socio-economic characteristics have to be studied, it is equally important to study the pattern of leadership that is emerging. In this study an effort has been made to investigate individual leaders on the one hand, and the network of relationships in which they are placed on the other.

The informal or traditional leadership dominated the village power structure in the pre-independence period. Each village was dominated by the presence of village panchayat which was consisted mostly of men from dominant upper castes in the village. These village panchayats were the centre of power in the villages. The informal leadership commanded submission from the members of the village with help of the
power of customs and traditions. Another important source of the sanctity of the authority of informal leadership was the strong sense of belonging to the place that the villagers had. This sense of belonging was in turn reinforced by a complex of attitudes concerning land which underlies the entire social structure of the village. The loyalty to ones caste by the villagers also added the power of the village leadership. Thus the emotional attachments of villagers to their villages as special entities and to caste groups have strengthened the informal leadership in the rural societies. Despite the changes taking place in rural societies as result of both internal and external forces, it is believed that informal leadership is still very active in the villages.

The rural social structure is a patch-work built of sub-caste, religion, and class, and the informal leadership reflects this social structure exactly. Every person in village is, therefore, in reality a member of a relatively small minority, and dearly needs the strength which informal leaders can give him, if he is to expect their help in backing him up and protecting him against other groups, he must in turn back them by seeking out and listening to their advice, and accepting whatever directives or punishments they see fit to mete out. Informal leadership is also assured by the ways in which it is acquired and transmitted. Although it is possible to acquire leadership, the normal way is through inheritance. But this is not to say that the qualities necessary for leadership in rural culture are ascriptive. In fact they must all be achieved. But the socialization process makes pretty sure that the hereditarily chosen elite come to acquire the attitudes and behaviour patterns demanded of a leader. Should the process fail, a leadership vacuum is created, and hence, non- hereditary leaders emerge.
A number of changes have taken place in the leadership structure in the Indian villages over the last five decades. The introduction of democratic decentralization has led to the setting up of formal centers of power in the Indian villages. The basis of power in these formal panchayats is the legal elections and not hereditary rules and authority of traditions and customs. The institutes of formal panchayats have brought drastic social changes in the rural societies, especially in the power structure. The locus of power which was earlier vested in the hands of few people from the land holding upper castes has become to all communities in the villages. It can rightly be argued that it is the formal panchayats initiated by the statue of the state machinery that has given the village panchayats to villagers for the first time. The so called informal village panchayats were not more than the congregation of the few people from the dominant castes. These panchayats never qualify to be called as village panchayats which have excluded certain communities from their folds. These panchayats acted as the guardians of caste rules and village boundaries and never acted as vehicles of change and development of rural societies. It is only after the introduction of democratic decentralization backed up by state legislations where in a certain number of seats in all the tiers of panchayati raj institutions are reserved for the SCs, STs, OBCs and women, the power equation has started tilting towards the more egalitarian social order. It has been said that the biggest achievement of the democratic decentralization in the country is the widening of the social base of Indian democracy. The formal panchayats have provided space to all the groups and communities in the villages and responded to the aspirations all villagers irrespective of caste, gender and landholding.
The introduction of land reforms and spread of education have further accelerated the pace of the democratization of the rural society. Consequently, a new modern, secular, development oriented formal leadership has emerged if not replacing but definitely sidelining the informal, traditional leadership in the villages. K.Ishwam (1968) has made an attempt to differentiate the informal leadership from the formal leadership in the following ways: (i) the informal leadership of the village is the old leadership, the formal leadership is something new, (ii) with respect to their titles the formal leader is called 'chairman', 'secretary', or by such other terms. The informal leader is called 'elderly' or 'big man', (iii) the informal leader wishes to preserve the old, the formal leader to introduce the new, (iv) the informal leader sees his activity as a duty, the formal leader desires to make a living out of politics, (v) the informal leader see politics the servant of kinship and caste, the formal leader wants to unify politics with interests extending beyond village lines, (vi) the informal leadership wishes to preserve social distance and division, the formal leadership wishes the rank and file to join together in support of its programmes and (vii) the informal leadership is interested in conservation, the formal leadership is interested in competition. One can argue that the informal rural leadership is the antithesis of the principles enshrined in our constitution where as the formal rural leadership which is the result of diverse social forces working on the rural society is democratic in spirit and deed.

The formal rural leadership is acting not only as the initiator and motivator of the development process in the Indian villages but also as the redistributive agencies of social and economic assets. The emerging rural leadership is perceived as the partner in the reconstruction of the socio-economic and political organization in the Indian villages.
However, the traditional forces always pose a threat to the democratic leadership. In fact it has been noticed that the Indian agrarian social structure is still much skewed one and is not easily allowing the democratic institutions to penetrate deep into the rural social structure. Therefore, the measures like land reforms spread of education and modern means of communication acquire greater significance in the successful working of the democratic institutions including the new rural leadership. It has been argued that the egalitarian values have been implanted on a very tough terrain of unequal social order of the Indian villages where the question of their sustenance is very pertinent. However it is also said that the rural leadership which has emerged as a result of the democratic decentralization is equally posing challenges to the existing inequalities in the rural societies. It is widely believed that the introduction of democratic institutions in rural society has created stress and tension in the traditional power structure.

Studies on patterns and process of rural leadership represent a comparatively new interest in social science research in India. The growing interest in the study of social change (or culture change) naturally calls for a detailed examination of the agents of change. In other words, analysis of leadership in change necessitates general studies in the field of leadership. The adoption of a national programme of sponsored change (covering economic development as well as social growth) lends a critical significance to studies on rural leadership, for it is rightly felt that the progress of developmental plans can be considerably accelerated by associating community leaders with them. Further, with the increasing politicization of our society, no sociological analysis of contemporary Indian society can be complete without an examination of the emerging political
processes. And the political process can not be understood without adequate studies of 
leadership.

This study has been done in the backdrop of tremendous socio – political changes 
taking place in the Indian villages. Most of the studies conducted on social change in 
rural India have seldom touched the issues of emerging rural leadership in a 
comprehensive manner. They focused on some aspects of rural leadership as a part of 
their studies on the overall village power structure and community organization. This 
study has made an attempt to focus its attention exclusively on the emerging rural 
leadership. This study is unlike the studies of rural leadership which have focused on 
single villages, add to the sociological literature by focusing on rural leadership in several 
villages or group of villages. It is this aspect of the study that may help to draw some 
valid generalizations on the emerging rural leadership all over India. Apart from focusing 
thoroughly on emerging rural leadership in a group of villages, this study has also tried to 
understand the interplay between education and rural leadership in the rural India. In this 
sense this study has tried to fill up the gap in multi- disciplinary approaches to the study 
of rural leadership.

This study will help us to understand the pattern and structure of emerging rural 
leadership in rural India. The findings of this study, especially about the functioning and 
value orientations of the rural leadership will help immensely in the preparation of plans 
and strategies for participatory development and deepening the roots of Indian democracy 
into the rural society.

The study of the socio-economic background of the respondents is one of the 
major objectives of the present research. This will help in understanding the emerging
socio-economic profile of the respondents and to analyze the bearing of the socio-economic background on their working style, values and attitudes. This chapter will also help in understanding to what extent the emerging leadership differs from that of the traditional leadership in terms of socio-economic indicators.

There are concerns about the performance and effective participation of women in panchayat raj institutions. But the noticeable thing here is that the response of the society in general and women in particular to the women reservation in panchayats is quite exciting one. This becomes meaningful not because the women have been represented not because of law but because society has responded very positively to the provision made by the law. This is reflected in the fact that about 44.00 per cent panchayat members are women. This trend is revolutionary in the sense, the patriarchic society where women are accorded lower status have started getting access to village decision making bodies. It is worth mentioning here that women were denied access to public spaces in villages and were confined only to house and field have come out and are having say in the development of their villages.

This is a clear indication of the fact that elderly leadership is being replaced by the youth leadership in Indian villages. This scenario is unlike what prevailed in the traditional village panchayats. The older age among other things was considered as a prerequisite of ascending to the positions of leadership in the traditional village panchayats. The youths were supposed to strictly adhere to decisions taken by the elderly both in family and in village that too both on personal as well as social issues. The democratization of the rural polity has changed this situation drastically. Now a day youths have gained access to decision making bodies and in fact they are in majorities in
most of the panchayats. The elderly people have now not only listen to youths but also abide by the decisions taken by the youth leaders regarding the development of their villages.

The noticeable observation is that the upper caste rural leaders have displaced their elderly people from the positions of formal leadership whereas in case of lower castes, even the elderly leaders have found significant presence though the SC/ST have highest percentage of young leaders. One of the possible explanations for this is that in case of upper castes a clear demarcation is maintained between the social leadership and political leadership where the former is still the domain of the elderly people. On the other hand, the SC/ST communities have been completely democratized where no distinction exists between social and political leadership. The positions of social leadership are open to the youth leaders and likewise the positions of political leadership are open to the elderly among the lower castes in the village communities.

It is noteworthy here to mention that Muslims are concentrated mostly in the urban centres in Karnataka. In most of the villages, Muslims constitute a mere one or two per cent of the population. However, it is impressive that not less than six per cent of the respondents of the study are from Muslim religion. It also reflects on the integrative aspect of the village communities where even Muslims have elected and accept as partners in decision making bodies. This becomes more meaningful considering the fact that there is no reservation in panchayat raj bodies exclusively for Muslims. Certain sections of Muslims can avail the reservation facility under OBC quota. But in this case they have to compete with other backward caste Hindus. Therefore, the representation of Muslims in panchayat bodies of the villages gains academic significance and needs
further attention. As far as other religions of Karnataka are concerned they find no representation in the panchayat bodies. The followers of Jainism have been included in the broader frame work of Hindu religion.

It is noteworthy that no caste groupings enjoys absolute majority in the panchayat bodies. In fact the dominance of upper castes has been eroded considerably as result of reservation of seats in panchayat bodies to members belonging to SC/ST and OBC (Other Backward Classes). Contrary to the dominance of the upper castes, the SC/ST and OBC together constitutes 56.40 per cent of the respondents which is much higher than the groupings of the upper castes.

However, the striking finding of the study is that the representation of the SC/ST and OBC is confined to the extent which is provided by the law in the form of reservation of seats to these communities. These communities have been unable to expand their representation beyond the space provided through reservation.

It is noticeable that compared with the leaders in the traditional village panchayats, the rural leaders of democratic panchayat bodies are well educated. This reflects on the fact that despite villages having on an average half of their population as illiterates are having about 80.00 per cent of their representatives, the educated one. This is a significant trend that has emerged in the new patterns of rural leadership.

It can be observed that the ratio of females to males is higher in case of illiterate and below primary education groups whereas the ratio of males to females is much higher as one move towards the higher levels of education. Thus, most of the male respondents are not only literates but are having higher education than the female respondents.
It is quite evident that the respondents from the upper castes are having higher educational qualifications than the OBC and SC/ST. The respondents from the SC/ST lag behind other communities. It is noticeable that out of 57 respondents belonging to SC/ST, 27 respondents are illiterates. Thus, about 50.00 per cent of the respondents belonging to SC/ST are illiterate. However, it is also interesting to note that even a sizeable number of respondents from SC/ST have got higher education as even there is one respondent from SC/ST who is graduate.

It is noteworthy that people associated with agriculture are dominating the panchayat raj institutions. The people who are daily wage agricultural labourers have also got access to the decision making bodies at the village level. This shows that the occupation as an attribute of an individual is not a determining factor to decide the accessibility to positions of leadership in the rural communities. The people who are pursuing lower occupations are not deprived of opportunities of leadership. The effectiveness of participation of panchayat members who are agricultural labourers is often questioned. These issues are addressed in the next chapters. The significant thing to notice here is that the agricultural labourers are sitting on par with landlords in the decision making bodies of villages.

The noticeable thing is that the ownership of land holding is important factor that facilitates the acquisition of leadership positions in the rural community. It is generally said in the Indian village that those who own land they command respect and those who command respect they rule over the masses. This statement has been substantiated by the fact that more than half of the respondents in the study have the ownership of more than 10 acres of land.
The noticeable thing is that the type of family as factor in accession to the positions of leadership has lost its significance. This is unlike the situation which was there in traditional village panchayats where the persons from bigger, joint family had better chance of occupying the positions of leadership in villages. The fact that about half of the respondents are from nuclear families makes it very clear that the type of family one hails from has no significant relation to his/her chance to become leaders in the rural communities.

The noteworthy thing here is that radio as a mass media has lost its importance considerably in rural India. It is unlike what was there in rural areas a decade back. The rural masses are no more dependent on radio for information or entertainment. Surprisingly most of the respondents were uncomfortable when they were asked about listening to radio as they thought that listening to radio is not a sign of modernity. It was observed that rural people were proud to say that they watch television and read newspapers rather than listening to radio. This is a significant change that has taken place in rural areas of our country.

This is a significant development that has taken place in the rural areas. The newspapers have become quite popular in rural areas along with the television. It is also observed that reading newspapers is looked something greater than listening to radio and watching television. The television, however, popular it is, has not replaced newspapers in rural areas.

It is noteworthy that most of the rural leaders have exposure to mass media which will definitely enhance their participation in decision making bodies of villages. The mass media exposure is believed to modernize the outlook of the rural leaders and
facilitates rapid socio-economic transformation of the rural communities. The noticeable observation of the study is that most of the rural leaders are well aware of what is happening in their surrounding — within state, country and outside the country.

It can be observed that mass media exposure is important factor in allocation of leadership roles among males whereas in case of female, the mass media exposure does not have much significance in the allocation of roles of leadership.

The rise of new leadership in rural India is a complex and dynamic process. It is noteworthy that different factors are involved in the emergence of leadership in Indian village. The study of the rural leadership requires special attention to the examination of the situations, factors, and events associated with the rise of rural leadership. In this chapter, the study of the leadership formation is attempted. The study intends to know the socio-economic and political issues involved in the making of new leadership in rural areas. The important variables like caste, gender, age, education and socio-economic status etc., have been used to explain the trends and patterns in the emergence of rural leadership.

It is observed that Muslims are given representation by the village caste leaders in gram panchayats to maintain the solidarity of the village. At the micro-level of the village social organization, Muslims are duly included in the social space and in fact they enjoy the status that of upper caste Hindus. In case of taluk and zilla panchayats, the considerations for the membership are purely pragmatic and political and social. Therefore, the competition among the upper castes for the positions of power makes strategic alliance of their caste groups across villages where Muslims find no mention. Muslims are treated on par with the upper castes only at the gram panchayat level and not
at the higher levels. This highlights fact that the artificial social consensus at the village 
level has failed to benefit the Muslims politically at the higher level.

Family as a social institution has strong bearing on the activities of its individual 
members. More particularly, the family standing in the power structure of the village 
determines to large extent the space available to its individual members in the rural 
political organizations. The political tradition of family affects the political socialization 
of its individual members and facilitates easy accessibility to positions of power. Thus, an 
attempt is made in the study to know the role of family tradition in making of rural 
leadership.

It is also observed in the study that the political tradition of the family of the 
respondents considerably vary according to certain characteristics like caste and 
ownership of land. Therefore, the study has made an attempt to examine this variation in 
the political tradition of the family of the respondents.

It can be observed that most of the respondents from SC/ST are first generation 
leaders who hail from such families which do not have any political history. In case of 
the middle castes i.e., OBC, the trend is very balancing between the first generation 
leaders and those leaders having political lineage. Most of the upper caste respondents are 
having the political lineage and very few leaders from first generation are emerged 
among the upper castes. Thus, it can be observed that lower castes have more democratic 
orientation than those at the higher level of the hierarchy.

The ownership of land and the political tradition of family are related. Those 
respondents who own more land usually hail from families with political lineage
The relationship between the caste leadership and rural leadership needs critical analysis. It is argued that the people who were in the positions of caste leadership have taken over the panchayat bodies. However, the study has found altogether different relation that exists between the caste leadership and the rural leadership.

It is observed that the positions of leadership in the formal panchayats of the village are free from the influence of caste/community to the extent that the caste leadership is not necessary condition for accession to these positions. It can be attributed to the fact that those in the positions of caste leadership are not entering the domain of democratic politics and wherever they have entered the people who do not have the experience of caste leadership have challenged their leadership through elections. The striking trend that the study reveals is that the emerging rural leadership makes clear distinction between the caste leadership and the democratic leadership.

The role of socio-political movements in the political socialization and leadership building process of the rural masses needs a special attention. It has been argued that participation of the rural people in the socio-political movements and activities helps them to inculcate the qualities of leadership and commitment to the public cause. Keeping this in mind, the study has made an attempt to understand the relation between the association of people with the socio-political movements and the emergence of rural leadership.

One can say that the previous association with any socio-political movements is not a pre-requisite for the accession to the positions of leadership in village level decision making bodies. However, the peasant movement under the leadership of Raita Sangh and the dalit movement under the leadership of DalitSangrash Samiti (DSS) have marked
influence on the masses in the rural areas and have in fact led to the rise of leadership among the peasants and dalits respectively.

The analysis of the initial socio-political activities of the rural leaders is very crucial in understanding the factors involved in the rise of rural leadership. It will throw light on the experience of the rural leaders and also help to understand whether the previous activities have facilitated the emergence of new leadership in the rural areas. Therefore, the study has made an attempt to examine the relation between the initial socio-political activities of the respondents and their bearing on the rise of new leadership.

It is observed that most of the respondents in the study have involved in some or other public activities before entering the electoral politics. It is noteworthy that the people who were involved in the party organizational work are more likely to emerge as leaders than those who have been engaged in other public activities. The finding shows that the emerging leadership in the villages is people oriented. The people who work for the public cause are chosen as leaders in the rural areas.

It is noteworthy that the most of the respondents from upper caste have started their political career by associating with organizational work of the political parties and they had no inclination towards social work and they are also not worked in the election campaign of the political parties during the elections. The situation is more or less same among the respondents from middle castes with only exception of a sizeable number of members from these castes have also worked in the election campaign of the political parties. The picture in case of the lower castes is entirely different as most of the respondents from these castes have worked in the election campaign of the political
parties and also a sizeable number of respondents from these communities have involved in the social work in the initial periods of their political career.

The remarkable development in the emergence of rural leadership is that the political party link plays crucial role in the making of leadership. It is observed that the people from the upper castes have better networking with the political parties and have obviously emerged as leaders in the rural areas.

It is understood that the initial involvement in the public activities shows the commitment of the respondents to the cause of public work and their entry in the electoral politics can be looked as a way of furthering their commitment to the cause of public work. In this context, it is observed that the most of the male respondents have consciously entered the electoral politics whereas in case of female respondents, most of them have entered politics without exposure to public work and can be well argued as a case of involuntary entry into the electoral politics.

The striking finding of the study is that the initial involvement of people in public work facilitates the making of leadership in case of males whereas in case of females, the initial involvement in public work has no influence in making of leadership.

The another striking finding of the study is that the education of the respondents and the nature of their initial socio-political activities are related to large extent. In general the respondents with higher education have worked in the organization of the parties whereas the respondents with no education or low level of education have mostly joined the politics directly by contesting the elections and have no initial exposure to any
public activities. Thus, it can be argued that the rural leaders with higher education have adequate exposure to public activities than those leaders without any education.

It is observed that the emerging rural leaders are young and they also initiated into the politics at the very young age. This is unlike the traditional rural leaders who were old and were also participated in the decision making process when they were very old.

The motives behind the decision to enter the politics indicate a lot of dynamics in the process of making of leadership. It will also help to know the important determinants in the formation of leadership in the rural communities and throws light on the changing dimensions of rural leadership in the villages. The study also helps to understand the outlook of the people and their commitment to the democratic institutions. It will also help to know the changing priorities of the rural leaders.

It is observed that the realm of politics in the villages has become more secular to the extent that the individual freedom has emerged as an important issue in the making of leadership where as social entities like village and caste have no longer enjoys the privilege of king makers. However, it is noticed that family as a social institution still hold its command over the individual members and is crucial factor in the formation of leadership in the villages. It can be well argued that political aspirations of the individual and the family have taken over the aspirations of the village and caste. This is striking finding of the study as in the earlier times the village leadership was entirely controlled by the caste and village and there was no space to individual aspirations.
It is observed that the male respondents have exercised their complete freedom over the issue of entry into the politics whereas in case of female respondents, most of them have entered the politics as result of family pressure. The study has revealed that the male respondents have high level personal ambition to enter the politics whereas the female respondents are under the tremendous control of the family and have entered the politics passively as a result of family pressure.

It is observed in the study that in both the family systems i.e., joint and nuclear, the women are supposed to obey the male members – the father-in-law in the joint family and the husband in the nuclear family. Women involving in any activity which the family has not consented are considered as deviances in the villages. Not only this, even woman expressing her desire to participate in the political activities is itself considered as immoral. In the villages women has no individual identity as she is always treated as daughter, daughter-in-law and wife. It is observed that is only in their old age that women do start getting respect in the family and village community.

It is observed in the study that the education of the respondents has a strong bearing on their motives to enter the politics. It can be concluded that the rural leaders with higher level of education are more likely to have personal ambition as a motive to join the politics than those respondents with lower level of education or no education. The rural leaders with lower level of education or no education are more likely to join the politics as result of the family pressure and not because of their own choice or desire. Thus, education boosts the morale of the people to enter the politics and develop leadership. Therefore, education is an important determinant in the making of the rural leadership.
The changing dimensions of the rural leadership can be understood better by studying the working style, values and attitudes of the rural leadership. These are three important areas where the changes that have taken place in the rural leadership must reflect upon. Further, the changes that have taken place in the working style, values and attitudes of the rural leadership are the testimony to that fact that new rural leadership has emerged in the villages. This chapter discusses the action and outlook of the rural leaders which will throw light on the changing dimensions of the rural leadership.

The study has found that the respondents have been very punctual in their work. However, it is observed that a lot of variation is found in the attendance of meeting by the respondents. This variation is studied by knowing its relation with the education and caste background of the respondents.

It is found in the study that the education plays crucial role in the socialization of the people in democratic governance. It facilitates the functioning of the democratic institutions in the villages by creating awareness among the members of the panchayat bodies. The rural leaders with higher level of education are punctual and consider their responsibilities seriously. Their participation in the decision making process is very high compared with respondents with no education or lower education.

The important finding of the study is that the remarkable awakening among the rural leaders belonging to lower caste. It can be noticed that more than two-third of the respondents from these caste have attended almost all the meetings. This indicates the increasing level of participation among lower castes in democratic institutions. It is
observed in the study that the people belonging lower castes consider democratic provisions as leverages of social mobility and try to take benefit of these measures. For a poor dalit attending a panchayat meeting is a mark of elevation of his/her status. It has much more symbolic value to lower castes compared to the upper caste leaders. This explains the high level of political participation among the dalits. It can be argued that the people from the lower castes are more democratically oriented because of the inhuman treatment meted out in the hands of the people from the upper castes. They always feel that democratization of the Indian villages have emancipated them and look for more drastic changes in the democratic governance at the grass root level.

The study has found that the female respondents are less democratically oriented than their male counterparts. While exercising their power, the female rural leaders rely largely on their families and fail to work independently of their family control. The male members on other hand do not work under the dictates of their family members and to large extent they are accountable to their followers as most of them consult their followers before taking any important decisions. Thus, one can easily conclude that the gender of the respondents is an important determinant of their source of consultancy.

The study has found that the educational background of the respondents has strong bearing on their sources for consulting to take a decision. It can be argued that the rural leaders who are having higher education are more likely to consult their followers than those respondents who are less educated or illiterates. Thus, the study leads to a hypothesis which states that the rural leaders with higher education are more likely to follow the democratic style of functioning whereas the rural leaders with lesser education or no education tend to follow the traditional style of working.
The study has found that instead of a clear cut dichotomy in the traditional or social responsibilities and developmental responsibilities, there exists a harmonious blending of the two among the emerging rural leadership. However, it is also noticed that there is a considerable variation in the exercising of these responsibilities by the respondents. It is found that characteristics like gender, age affect the people approaching the respondents for seeking help in redressing their family problems. This aspect is also examined in the study.

It is found in the study that compared with female rural leaders, more number of male leaders exercises responsibilities of social leadership. The legal provision has enabled the women to occupy leadership positions in the panchayat bodies. But the study found that it is only a nominal or symbolic in value as these women leaders have not been accepted on par with their male counterparts in the decision making in the context of their communities. The social positions of leadership are still predominated by males in the villages. It is also noteworthy that the formal leadership that has emerged as a result of democratization of the village communities has been accepted by the villagers even as social leadership. It is a remarkable dimension of the emerging leadership in rural areas that instead of traditional leadership controlling it, it itself has started displacing the traditional leadership.

The study has found that a sizeable number of respondents have developed a democratic outlook of handling the opposition and criticism. This becomes significant considering the fact that the villages were once known for feud, violence and enmity. However, it is also found that there is considerable variation in the stands taken by the
respondents towards their critics. The study has made an attempt to explain the variation in the stands taken by the respondents towards their critics and criticism.

It is found in the study that education facilitates and promotes the democratic style of functioning in the rural areas. The rural leaders with higher level of education are more democratically oriented in their functioning than those leaders who are illiterates or having low level of education.

It is observed in the study that there is considerable variation in the political goals and ambitions of the rural leaders according to their gender. The most of the male rural leaders have higher political goals and ambitions whereas the female rural leaders believe in the status quo principle and have lesser inclination towards political mobility. This can be explained by referring back to the motives of the rural leaders to enter the politics. As we discussed earlier, the female rural leaders have joined the politics precisely because of the pressure from the family. Therefore, they are not enthusiastic about their future political career. However, it is noteworthy that most of the female rural leaders have expressed their willingness to continue in their positions. This highlights the fact that given an opportunity female rural leaders can develop interest in the work as representative of the rural masses.

The study has found that the education facilitates the political mobility and change. The rural leaders who are having higher education are found politically more mobile and dynamic. Therefore, it can be concluded that the rural leaders with higher education are more likely to higher political goals and ambitions compared with rural leaders who are illiterates or having lower level of education.
The study has found drastic changes in the value system and attitudes of the respondents. Most of the respondents have developed liberal and democratic values. The respondents have expressed their feeling that people from all castes should be allowed to take participation in the decision making bodies of the villages.

The study has found that the role of caste in the public life has drastically reduced but it still is the most preferred social institution of rural masses. The rural leaders agree with the public and democratic positions should be caste-free. However, they feel that the caste is very important for their personal and family matters.

The study has found that the outlook of the rural leaders has changed a lot. Unlike the traditional leadership, the emerging leadership in the rural areas is more development oriented. This has been reflected in their open support to the nuclear family system which once was considered as immoral social institution by the majority of the villagers.

The study has found that the rural leaders liberal dealing with issues that matter in public life. But there is still the powerful influence of the traditional institutions in the private life and personal affairs. Since marriage is personal matter, they go by the traditional practices and norms while dealing with it.

The study has found that as far the rights of the women are concerned the rural leaders are very supportive and liberal. This is a remarkable change in the dimension of the rural leadership as the rural leadership in the earlier times was not liberal towards issue of participation of women in public life.
Recommendations and suggestions:

Based on the above mentioned findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations and suggestions can be given for the policy making and intervention in the field of democratic decentralization and grass root governance:

(1) There is need of improving the qualitative participation of the women members of panchayat bodies for which educational programmes like workshop, seminar, field visits need to be arranged on regular basis.

(2) The effective participation of the leaders from the lower castes can be ensured if they are provided with a source of livelihood. Therefore, the poverty eradication programmes need to address this issue seriously.

(3) The steps should be taken to create awareness among the rural leaders about their rights and responsibilities

(4) There is need of having a harmonious interface between the panchayat leadership and the traditional leadership

(5) The steps should be taken to enhance proper coordination between the bureaucracy and elected executive at the grass root level

(6) There is need of strengthening the accountability of the rural leaders to their villagers by organizing gram sabha on solid basis

(7) The steps should be taken to strengthen the democratic spirit and healthy opposition among the rural leaders.

(8) The steps should be taken to prevent the intervention of extra-constitutional agencies like family, caste in the functioning of the panchayat bodies.