CHAPTER-9

* Conclusion *
Conclusion Of Panchayat

The present study, as stated in its introduction chapter, makes an empirical analysis of the working of village panchayats in West Bengal in leadership context. It is based on the study of three Village Panchayats, namely, Ruipukur, Dhubulia-I and Jahannagar — two of them are in dist Nadia and other one is in Burdwan district. The study has examined the role of Panchyati leadership in realizing the objectives of West Bengal New Panchayati Act 1994, with special reference to democratic decentralization, modernization, decision-making, and political linkage.

In chapter-2 a brief discussion has been made on Structure and Development of Panchyati Raj. It is found that, the list of 29 areas including in the eleventh Scheduled of the act is flexible giving discretion the PRIs to select schemes depending on local resources and problems. It may be added that prospect of PRIs would be on increase keeping in mind the pace of economic liberalisation in India. In fact, they would become watchdog bodies to ensure proper implementation of the generation programmes like the JRY, poverty alleviation and special programmes like IRDP, TRYSEM, and area development programmes like DPAP, DDP, etc., all schemes falling under MNP and programmes of the nature of local development works. In fact, the PRIs would play an important role in accelerating socio-economic development in rural areas.
It can be observed that the democratization of our pluralistic society cannot be ensured merely through and administrative actions of the state. These enabling provisions will require massive mobilization support and non-governmental organizations, academics and professional bodies, political parties and other groups should involve themselves in exerting pressure to restore power to the place where it belongs. For the entire exercise of decentralization, people like school teachers, progressive farmers, social workers and professionals should be involved. Above all, the PRIs elected representatives should also be trained in rising over their electoral rivalry. They should be made to understand that once the elections are over, the rivalry ends.

The Panchayati Raj system is at the cross-roads. We are to choose a path for progress and development, devoid of corruption, nepotism and venality. For this purpose instead of putting a blame on bureaucracy squarely, political system requires extreme reforms particularly in code of conduct. A strong and honest leadership at the top is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient to attain this goal. The other power echelons of the system are to follow the tenets of the leadership. It is a Herculean task, but regarding West Bengal, as an 'ENLIGHTENED' state, it is achievable.

Social Base And Profile Of Panchayati Leadership

It was hypothesized that the democratic decentralization at village level leads to the emergence of democratic leadership. The specific indices used in the form of sub-hypotheses have been used to test the main hypotheses related to the study of socio-economic background, educational
attainment political background of the leaders as well as their participation in community organization. It was observed that the PRIs were controlled by rural elites belonging to the upper cast of the society. The leadership factor is very important because in any organization what primarily matters is the people who run them. If the majority of rural leaders come from higher cast and economically better-off sections, the benefits will not flow to the lower strata of the rural population. But, it is borne out by the study that the role of ascriptive factors like higher cast, enormous wealth in the form of landed property are on decline. Regarding participation of leaders in community organization, it appears that all the panchayat leaders are in a way or other associated with various community organizations. As regards the political background of panchayat leaders, it is found that the majority of them have no previous experience of active politics although they have, by and large, affiliation to different political parties. It is very significant that among these three Panchayats—one Panchayat President is female and this panchayat i.e., Ruipukur Gram Panchayat have also a women representative in general category contesting election. It is clear from the above discussion that, if the Government, both at the Centre and State, initiate sustained effort in the proper direction the Panchayati Raj would meet the aspirations of weaker sections to a great extent.

The study indicates that the rural West Bengal leadership characteristics differ from those described in some of the studies carried out in other states of India by such authors as S. N. Mishra, S.K. Dey, K.S. Bhatt, C. Harichandran.
Modernisation Of Panchayati Raj

The major hypotheses built up with regard to the role perception, role behaviour and role constraints of the panchayat leaders in the process of modernization was that the panchayati leadership would escalate the process of modernization by implementing various developmental programmes at the village level. An analysis of the data confirms the sub-hypotheses that panchayat leaders have perceived the necessity of modernizing the villages, particularly to bring some of the fruits of modern science and technology within the reach of the common men living in the villages. The study shows that all the panchayat leaders are aware of the basic problems faced by the villagers. The most vital problems of the villagers are the problems of health, agriculture, water, education, roads-communication and flood etc. Besides, a few leaders have mentioned the problem of poverty, unemployment, housing, electrification, sports etc. In sphere of agriculture, villagers are faced with the problems as lack of proper irrigation facilities. Moreover, annual occurrence of flood in the villages causing loss of life and property, including crops.

The modernisation in terms of development is not up to the expectations due to some constraints. The major constraints for which development suffers relates to lack of illiteracy of people, lack of time, lack of team spirit of panchayat leaders as reported by them. Beside this factors, the overall performance of these three panchayat leadership in respect of developmental functions appears to be satisfactory. The record of Dhubulia-I and Jahannagar Gram-Panchayat are in a satisfactory level. Incase of Ruipukur Gram-Panchayat due to some lack of finance it has not reached satisfactory level. But considering other things we can say that it will be in a satisfactory level in very near future.
The communication system in these three village panchayats are in well position. Because, now a days, telephone are available in the remote corner of the villages in the grace of BSNL (Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited).

Decision-Making and planning of Panchayati Raj

The major hypothesis which was worked out to study the role perception, role behaviour and role constraints of panchayat leaders in decision-making and planning process was that panchayat leaders would effect the democratic decision-making process at the village level. The analysis of the data shows that panchayat leaders have clearly perceived their role in democratic decision-making process. Majority of the leaders are in favour of people’s participation in the process of decision-making. They seem to be democratic in their attitude too. And overwhelming majority of leaders rejected outright the idea of unquestionable acceptance of higher leaders’ advice and are of the opinion that every important matter awaiting decision should be discussed with the people. However, with regard to the decision-making method, 88% favours consensus while only 12% favours the principle of Majority votes in decision-making.

With regard to actual behaviour of leaders in decision-making, it appears that in the conduct of panchayat meetings formal rules and procedure are observer by all the village-panchayats. All the panchayats concerned have held the required number of village panchayats meetings and sometimes even more. Attendance of members including ex-officio members is found to be encouraging in the village panchayats meetings. The members seem to enjoy freedom of debate and discussion.
However in all the panchayat meetings decisions are found to have been taken by consensus. Thus the sub-hypothesis that Panchayat meetings are conducted within the legal provisions.

Since district and decentralized planning has been emphasized in 74th Constitutional Amendment Act and District Planning Councils have been constituted, it is hoped that a need-based planning, reflecting the hopes and aspiration of the people, will be the usual feature. At the same time, they will not remain only on paper but effectively implemented as implementing agency will be the PRIs themselves.

For the last few years there has been a sharp shift in the perception of rural people towards the change in developmental activities. Political and social awareness have also opened the eyes of so far deprived section of the rural society. The administrative innovation to bring about deliberate change in PRIs for better results, it would be effective unless devolution of power from the Centre to State, State to District and District to Panchayat units is rationalized and exercised in true sense. Any talk of power to the people becomes meaningless unless power is exercised by the people at the grass-root level for the society and political awareness is channelised in the right direction. The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act, further, aims at reducing political and bureaucratic interference in rural development programmes. For this, many states have redefined and redesigned the role of state bureaucracy in order to facilitate effective functioning of PRIs. It is felt that what Gandhiji said in 1946 is going to be materialized with the help of the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act. The statement of Gandhiji is as follows:

"Independence must begin at the bottom. Thus every village will be a republic or Panchayat having full powers. It follows, therefore, that every village has to be self-sustained and capable of
managing its affairs even to the extent of defending itself against the whole world.

In case of planning, we are now aware to utilizing the natural resources and their existence. Going one step further, there are the liabilities of today which could be the assets for tomorrow. Giving one specific example, the compost and waste material of the city, which is one of its great liabilities could be an excellent asset for crop production in the rural areas if there is a proper interaction between the rural and urban areas. That is why Asoka Mehta committee had made a specific mention of the rural-urban continuum. A low line and waterlogged area of a village could be a present liability giving a poor insignificant yield of paddy and breeding mosquitoes to boot. If this is converted into a pond it could be a durable asset for undertaking pisciculture, having a duckery and various other activities. The waste material of one process could be the growth element for some other activity.

Based on the above theme, The Chief Minister of West Bengal, who advocated the farmers of his constituency to give up the cultivation of the main paddy crop and switch over to the same crop in other seasons. Though the suggestion was ridiculed in the beginning, his persistence paid rich dividends. The area is now one of the richest producers of the off season paddy and the landscape itself has changed beyond recognition. The flood water is being welcomed along with the rich silt that is carried by it and converted into an asset in the following season. These are only illustrative examples and should serve as eye-openers to us.

In regard to futuristic trends in Panchayati Raj politics, effectively of Gram-Sabhas, changing social relationship and emerging social movements, similar optimism has been expressed by many social scientists.
It is our hope that the end of 2015AD, the PRIs may be deeply rooted in the rural community and become the real vehicle of change and development in West Bengal – the most important State in India to full fill the hopes and aspirations of the people in years to come.

CONCLUSION OF WOMEN:

We as a nation are committed to the empowerment of women. However, the journey towards progress is long and arduous. In a world of challenge and competition, we have to constantly attune ourselves to the changing needs.

The development of the country is not possible if women, as half of human resources, reserved labour force and as citizens, stay away from national development process. Women’s participation in the political process of development is of crucial importance from the consideration of both equity and development.

Fortunately India has witnessed great changes in last two decades. As old prejudices and gender based inequalities are giving way to gender equality and harmonious development.

Women today are no longer content to remain peripheral actors, and want to play their right full role in all sphere of life. The political emancipation and social empowerment will act as main catalyst in achieving the total empowerment of women.

The participation in Panchayats has had impact on their sense of self. The data on their perceptions, recognition, respect, enhanced status, confidence levels, enhanced levels of mobility
and exposure, their increased political aspirations and community’s perceptions and evaluation of their performance are seen as markers of empowering process for this long disadvantage group.

The debate on their participation levels and their leadership development continues, but it has been noted that despite all the odds stacked against them, the post 73rd amendment panchayats have shown emerging leadership of rural women and that they have move ahead from the initials learning phase in the first year after the 1994 and 1995 elections when they entered Panchayats in a critical number for the first times.

With the second Panchayat Elections held in the state which had post amendment elections in 1994 and 1995. It is seen that majority of the women continue to contest positions reserved for them. The rotation deprives even those women from contesting again who have performed well in their first five years, particularly where there candidature has to be supported by the political party formally or informally, due to resistance to women’s candidature from aspiring male candidates within the political parties. The mandatory or automatic rotation of the reservation every five years or less has also not contributed to building and supporting leadership of women and they have to work harder to contest subsequent elections. Women are also only slowly learning how to build alliances with other social collectives with other women and with other sections to build on their initial entry in public life. This is where the civil society and the women’s movement in particular have an important role to support women’s emerging leadership in the rural local bodies.
CONCLUSION OF MEDIA

The first objective of the study was to know the media awareness and the media behaviour of the people and to measure the effectiveness of different media.

Maximum Leader prefer the News Paper AAJKAL as the three village are the traditional strong-hold of Communist in the state of West Bengal. Leaders have much tendency to sports news and this create awareness among them. As a result people are signing in the field of sports from the village. Communication has become more effective as telephone is present in all the three Panchayats. This view no doubt reflects a revolutionary attitude in media concept.

On the basis of overall performance of Panchayats, Women representatives and Media Role played in Panchayat is definitely a positive step towards strengthening the PRIs. West Bengal, that state has already incorporated much of the changes now contemplated as per the New Amendment. And the New Act may be definitely considered as an important “MLISTONE” in the History Of Panchayati Raj in India which has witnessed many ups and downs.